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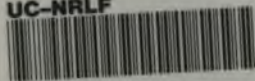
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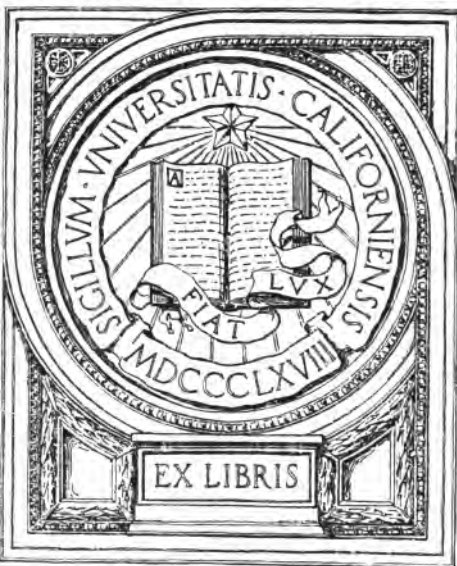
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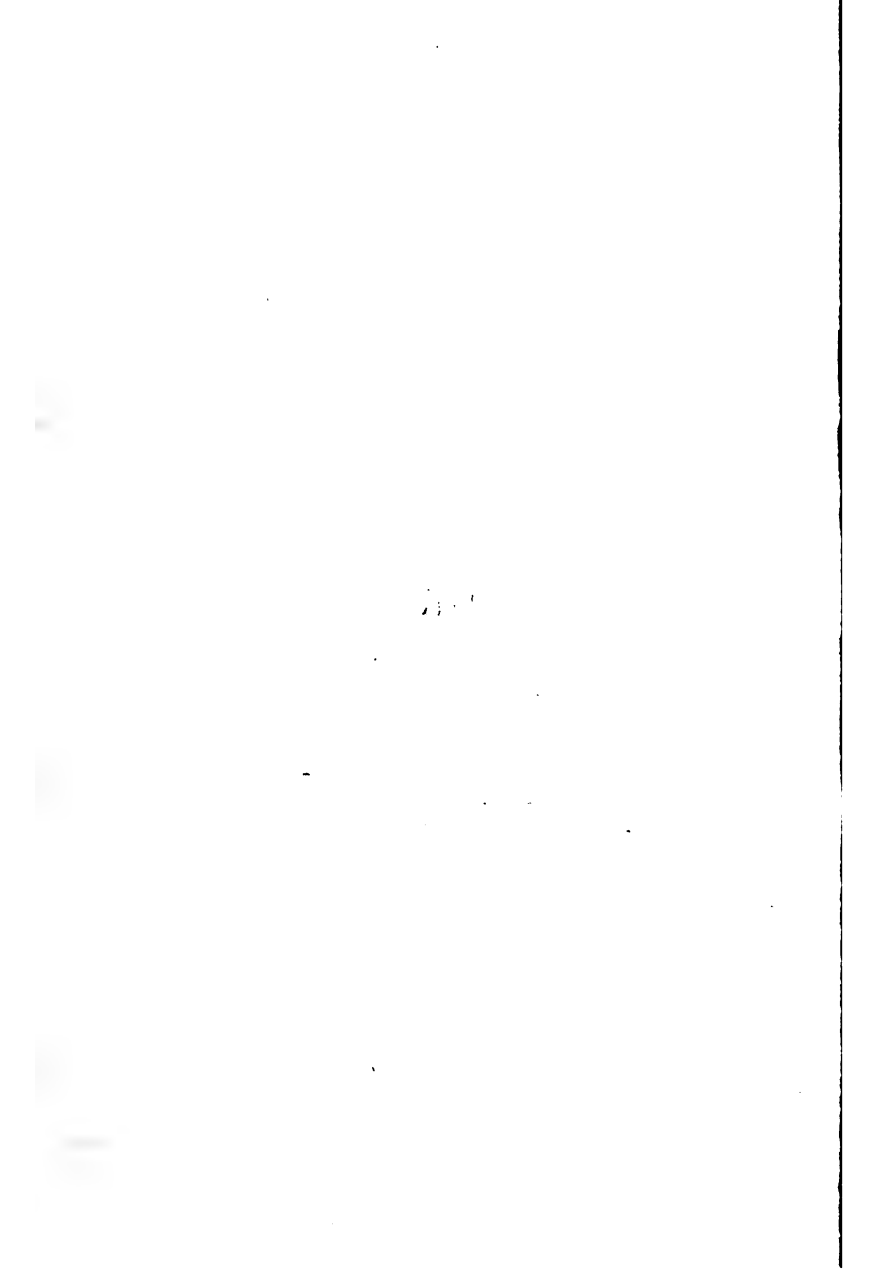
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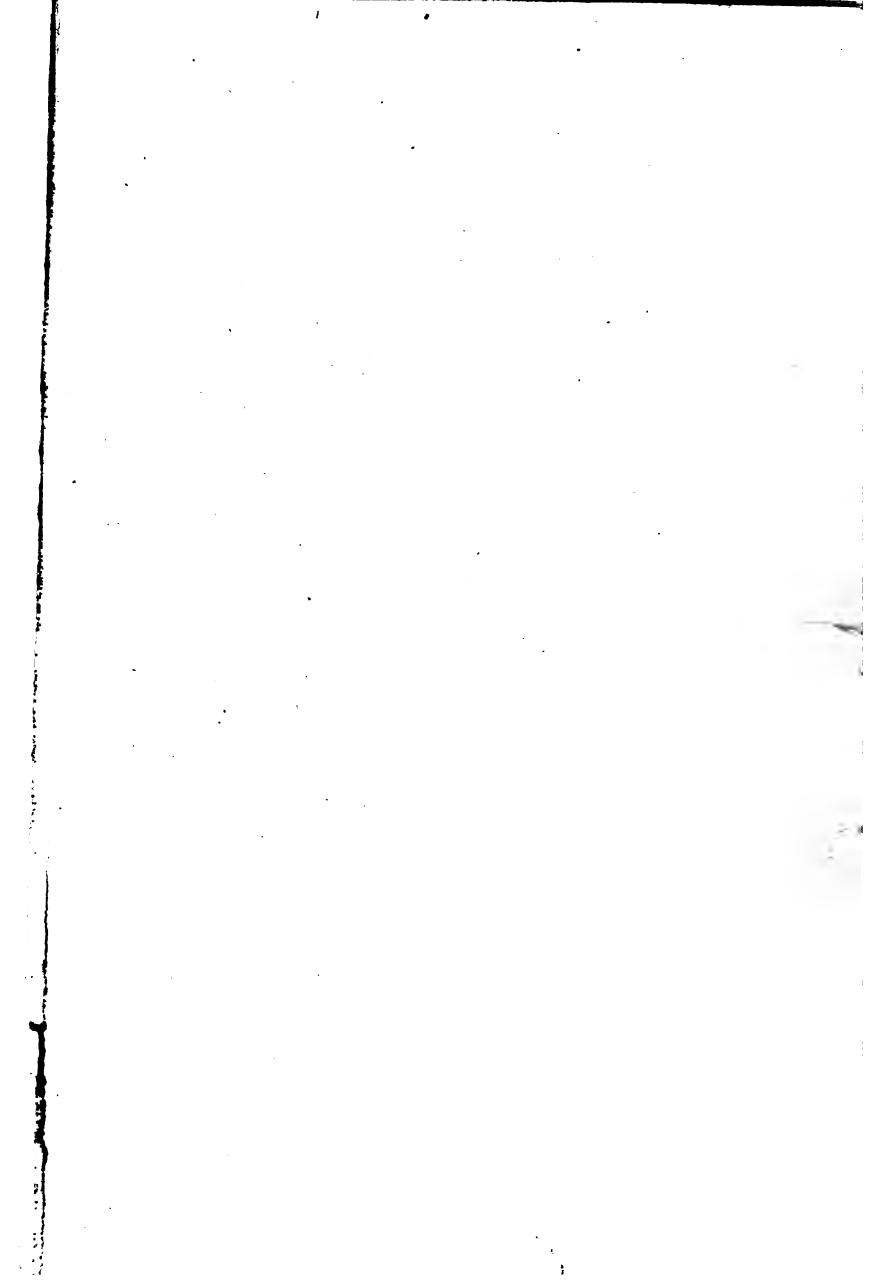
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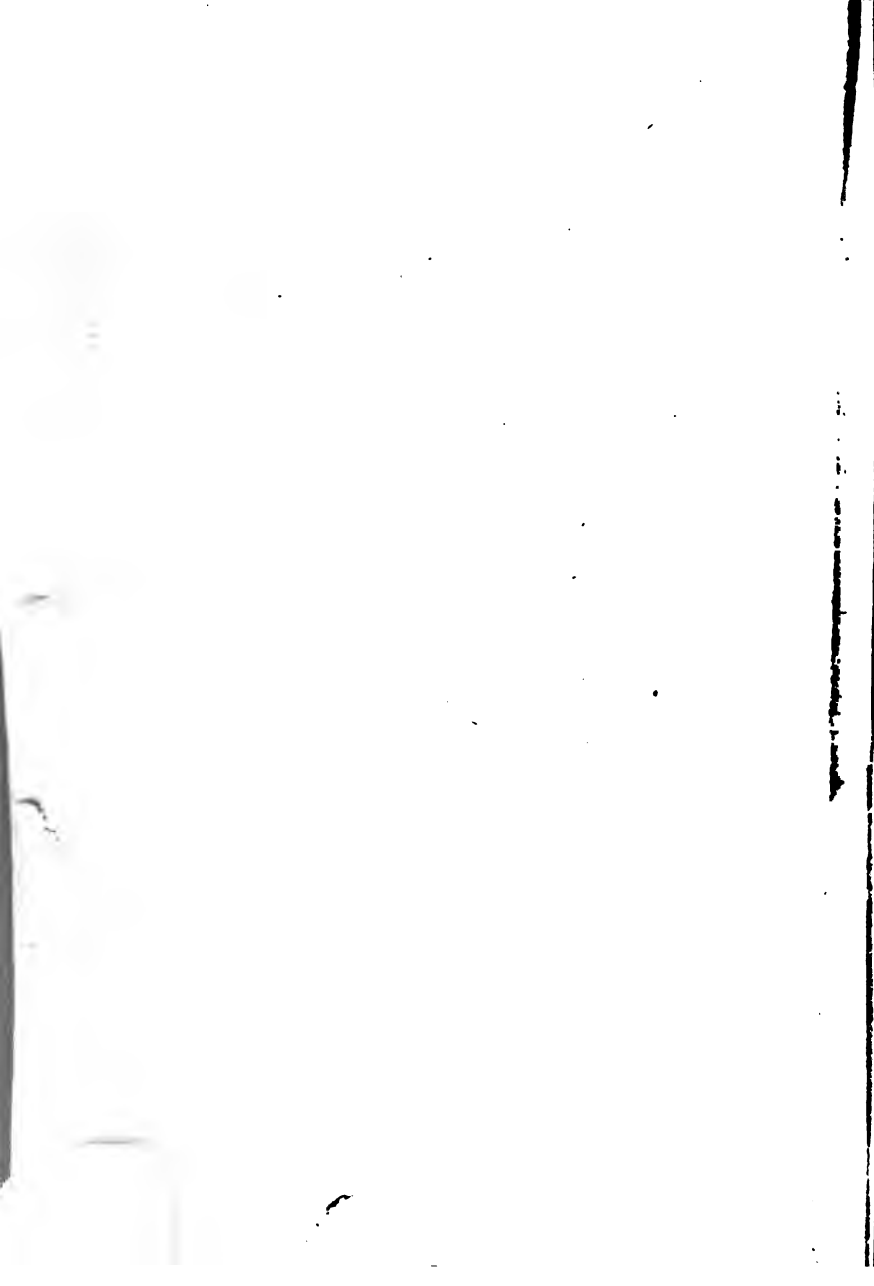
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THE MAN WHO WANTED A BUNGALOW

*Being the Veracious Account of an Author Who
Went Back to Nature to Get Inspiration
and Reduce Expenses*

By

LIONEL JOSAPHARE

Author of "A Tale of a Town," "The Sovereign in the Street,"
"The Lion at the Well," "Turquoise and Iron," Etc.

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DEDICATION

To John D. Rockefeller:

Perhaps you will be surprised to hear from me at this late date, seeing that that which might have been never was, is not, and it might be that wasn't.

You will doubtless remember how when, as boys, we did not go fishing in the same rustic pool, nor sit side by side sharing the contents of our simple lunch baskets. Fond memories of later years which we did not enjoy together on the golf links nor at your summer home, still linger with me, as, I trust, with you.

I do not dedicate this book to you because you are a rich man. I would not stoop to such an affectation. It is because you are the very richest that I thought of you immediately.

Perhaps at a future time we may renew the friendship that was unreal; for unreality is the ideal.

Therefore in token of the many things we have in common, you in the reality and I in the ideal, our many industries, charities and fortunes, yours from oil-wells and mine from ink-wells, permit me to inscribe myself, with a deep regard for your sources of income,

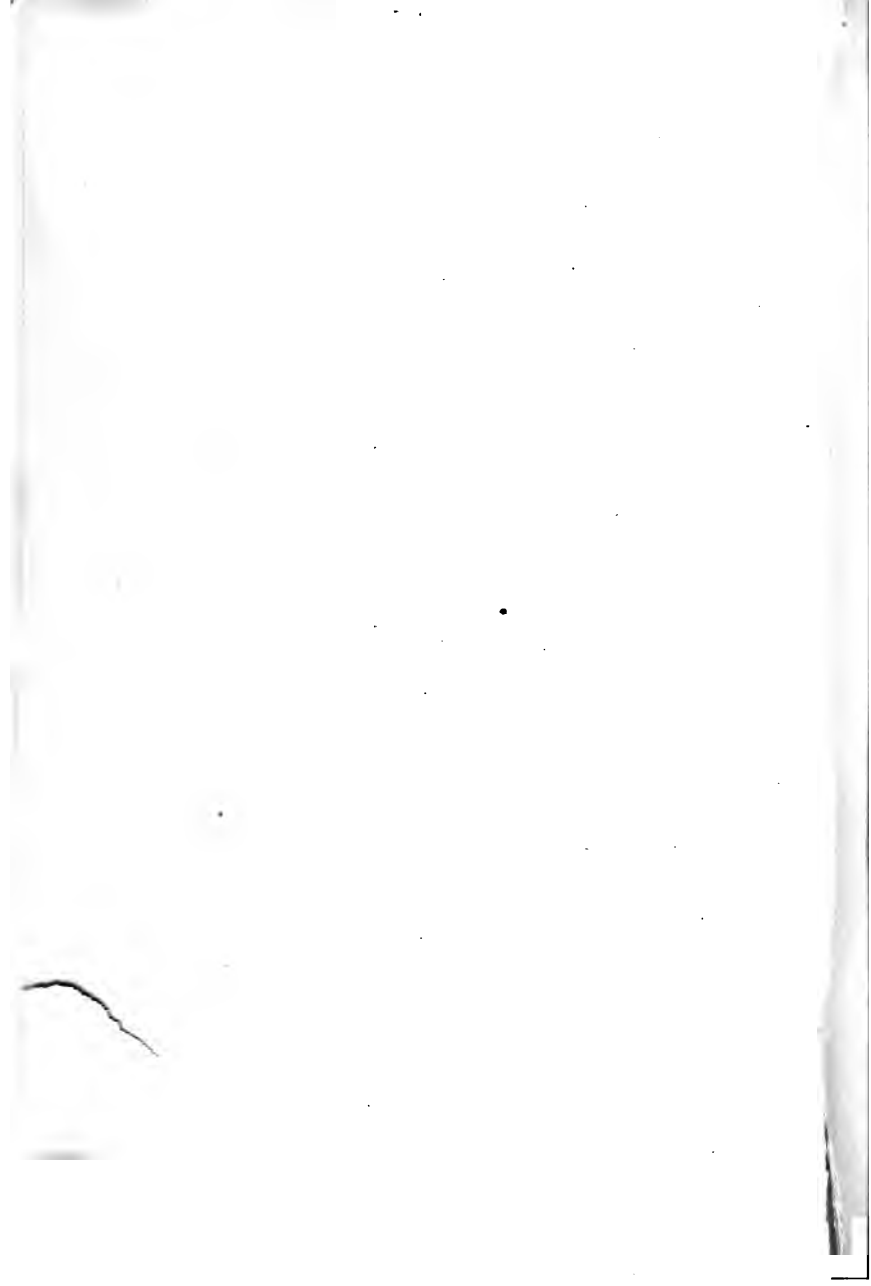
Your well wisher,

L. J.

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The Man Who Wanted a Bungalow

BUYING A STUDIO FARM

Almost every man who knows the meaning of "sky-blue" or likes to look at a squirrel, has had longings for the country. A City life supplies all the luxuries except sweet air and sound livers. Does not the imagination in a dark dining room verily smell the walls of restraint? And do not the far-fancied field-lights and the distant azure burn voluptuously?

I had lived in a village when a boy, proud of every wart on my fingers; which proves me a predisposed lover of Nature. In the later muddle of a metropolis, rural fancies were constrained to exercise themselves with Spring poems, sonnets to choice neighborhoods of Creation, and such interpretations, that were not worth one real glance at a buttercup or shoes printed with dew by the blades of grass. The City tills the mind with commercial thoughts. It puts muck on our heart-felt desires, until mushrooms grow in the gloomy instincts we had theoried with roses for the sunlight. It makes us cross as the Devil with his tail caught in the door when we have to wait five minutes for dinner. This brings the wish for meadows where there is no waiting, because nothing is expected, and nothing

comes except many varieties of quietude. You sit by a plashy creek, and a bullfrog that looks as wise as if he had been reading Schopenhauer, causes you more amusement than a vaudeville show on Ellis Street. A beetle that has fallen on its back arouses more excitement than a fire or a runaway in the Western Addition. And a woodtick in the armpit makes all Nature seem sublime.

Often a mild summer breeze would bring me boyhood fragrances, fairyland impulses; a board walk edged with furze, make me dream of treading the landscape, joyous as a god who has thrown away his watch and time-table.

There was another phase. Rents, pleasures and prices were doing a startling aerial performance in my resources. My literary achievements did not attract an income of strong steady pulsation. There would be periods of few receipts from editors, unharmonizing with the systematic business tones of boarding-house keepers. My own landlady had a first-of-the-month scowl that was like the dungeons of despair. In her evil times, it gave me rheumatism and palsy and the gout to approach her. Requesting two days of her indulgence was accompanied by more anguish than a confession of all the rest of my sins. Supplementing this plea with a statement that I had money in the bank made her milk of human kindness turn to limburger cheese and infect me with the blues for an hour.

The idea came that on an acre of ground I could make one successful month help along a subsequent bad one, as if holding the net for a bad fall of prosperity. Then, with vegetables bobbing up from the ground at all seasons of the year (I saw them bobbing in gorgeous array) and chickens laying eggs here and there, a cow with its portable, inverted milk fountain,

I would never lack homely provender. With a capital of \$200, the first payment could be made; I could farm the mortgaged acre a few hours a day, and, with my pen, cultivate it as an acre of Parnassus during the others. Literary labors would be unharassed by the punctual outlays of the City. Time would not be despot to tax me with bills for the maintenance of an appetite. I pictured myself off in the seclusion of this acre, free as Piping Pan, industrious as Vulcan, and yet not so far from San Francisco as to become hayseedy and afraid of modern improvements.

Not knowing just what town across the bay would offer the most inducements, I scanned the newspaper advertisements and found it to be a case of no good nor better, but all best. I could either take pains to select the choicest of the charming, the balmiest of the best, or make no mistake by trusting to the Pandemonium of chance. Almost all were within a half hour of San Francisco, exquisite opportunities, the whipped cream of a bargain, the most logical of locations. And all desired me to act quickly and secure one of the cheapest little homes yet offered, one that would bear the closest investigation.

In this mood, I consulted a real estate agent and confided my plans. He thought I was doing the wisest thing in the world. This made my ardor feel as phenomenal as the four elements at the outset. For what better start can one have than with doing the wisest thing in the world, especially in the worldwise opinion of a real estate dealer?

He had the place I required: a four-room bungalow in an acre of ground north of Melrose. Melrose! I had read of it often in all sizes of type. It had been to me one of those intangible situations alluded to as twelve miles from San Francisco, twenty minutes from Oak-

land, convenient to Haywards; though the temptation of being convenient to Haywards never seemed to me a strong play on the imagination. Having read, during several weeks, of a delightful spot so many miles from somewhere and so many minutes from somewhere else and convenient to otherwheres, I had no hint of it being Melrose. Now was the delightful spot discovered.

On this acre, I was now told, existed a cow, a bull, and a "veal," six pigs and fifteen chickens. O gar-rulity! I had unconscientiously yearned to possess some fauna of this character, but lacked the courage to affront my town-lubbering friends by collecting them. There they were, and I could not help their being there. Besides, I would not have known how to buy them, had I so desired. They were part of the acre. It would be unnecessary to move into my new quarters leading fifteen chickens, six pigs, a bull, a cow and a veal at the end of so many strings and ropes through Melrose to my farm. I would take this property, if it pleased me on inspection; and would inspect forthwith.

Its price was \$2000 and would soon be worth twice as much; had cost \$3000; but the owner was going east and would accept \$200 cash, I to assume the mortgage.

On the following day I took the broad-gauge train for Melrose. A bulwark stopped the local from running into the main street. This thoroughfare did not cause any highfaluting throbs of admiration until I caught sight of a canvas sign over a real estate office; to wit: MELROSE, THE CHICAGO OF THE WEST. This encouraged as well as surprised; for there was nothing Chicagolike that I would have discovered by my own sense of sight or smell.

I followed directions northward past the Boulevard unto an open country.

The scenery was not romantic, not fascinating as a spread of beauty nor yet engulfed in the artistic dismal. It was just Nature common-place. Most of the ground was in stubble. The cottages and shacks here and there were neither beautiful as bright homes nor picturesque ruins. Neither a carpenter nor an art critic would have praised them. Some of the little gable-roofed things were patterned after that school of architecture often seen on the slate of an eight-year-old boy. The paths, edged with dry grass (future streets, I opined) took one over undulating fields the most dazzling aggregation of blank spaces that ever lured the marvelous eye of a grasshopper. These future streets were not straight; but many of Boston's streets, I had heard, were old cow-paths. Why not the same in the Chicago of the West, with its probability of two thousand inhabitants?

One irregular pass, about eight inches wide, I named Parnassus Avenue as I went along, in honor of the Muses that were to come there. A short way ahead, Parnassus Avenue ran disappointingly into a tent in the back yard of a home-made shack. Still I allowed the name to stand irrevocably. Prudently refraining from styling other thoroughfares until their thoroughness should be an established fact, I followed another way, which eventually went between the legs of a horse in another back yard, and was thence lost to view; so I thought there would be nothing unseemly in calling it Pegasus Alley, in honor of said equine, and with hopes for the alley's future. I then pursued the Appian Way until it ended at an old beer bottle.

Presently I came to "my" bungalow and acre.

A slim dame in faded pink flannel was at the gate.

Such entire forgetfulness and subterranean dimness were in her eyes that I guessed she had drunk of the waters of Lethe and eaten of asphodel and moly (which, I thereby judged, were not fattening).

She guided me around without enthusiasm or even human interest, save whatever pathos one could make out of her. The grounds, I saw with my unrural eye, had not been cultivated recently. The cows had not been brushed nor the fences and trees dusted. Some of the newspapers lying about the back door looked as if they had not been washed for months. The principle growth was straw and feathers. In a fenced-off tractlet was the cow family. The only animated part of the bull was his mouth, which worked into all sorts of queer convexities and paraboloids. The cow was a thoughtful, red-plush creature, and seemed to be ruminating upon some new philosophy, which appeared to sour her nature, and, I feared, her milk. The calf was pretty well grown up, and if in a circus, I would have thought him a little camel. He did not possess much of his mother's temperament. Occasionally he would start off as if imagining himself a butterfly; then would stop and look at the distant hills to distract attention from his incongruous behavior. But he so resembled a camel that I forgave him for acting like a butterfly.

We next called on the pigs, which looked at me critically from their wallow. In fact, so fatuously supercilious was the stare of one of the porkers that I hesitated giving him the satisfaction of purchasing him. The chickens, on the contrary, were a cheery lot, and the bungalow nooky with ideals. It was an inspiring home in which to write; and I told the woman so. The statement caused a momentary human light in her eyes. Having assured her I would ar-

range with the agent to take the place, I strolled back to Melrose station.

On the way I noted that the main activity of Melrose consisted of five small boys flying kites and a tow-headed girl eating pale bread with brilliant red jelly. Something in my soul tempts me to spell it t-o-e headed, which might have been a slight injustice to the size and shape of her innocent pate.

This soporific environment called for approval, though, and my heart responded with tumultuous applause.

Back to the City; which now took on the aspect of a distant town to my home in Melrose. I paid over the \$200, which included a \$100 check I had just received from an eastern magazine. Less than \$100 in cash remained to me. Most of this went for the expenses of moving, payment for a couch and cooking utensils and provisions. Other furniture was to be bought as the mood seized me and I could seize the cash. Gradually I would add pictures, ornaments, quaint lamps and articles of interest until Melrose should have one of the show places of Pacific Coast Literature; or, in other words, a literary studio fit for the "Chicago of the West."

Ah! I remember my last night in the City. I was ready to steal away early in the morn, from trolley noises, rumbling streets, labyrinthal discomfort. Yet even as I was about to leave them they seemed to manifest strange melodies and colored apparitions of association to hold me.

I stood late at my bed-room window, peering down a narrow angle of illuminated street; then arranged for a grand voluntary du matin on the alarm clock, and went to sleep.

LAUREL AND ALFALFA.

There are few things in the world that, for length, breadth, thickness, and Oriental imagery, exceeded my ignorance of agriculture. Frequently having heard the expression that what a certain man did not know about a certain thing would make a pretty big book, it once occurred to me to put the idea into practice. And if so, to make haste; for, after spending a year on my farm, I knew less about its needs than when I began. Should I delay longer, there is no telling to what seeming impossibilities my void of knowledge would extend, and What I Do Not Know about It make an impractibly large volume.

In the custody of my estate, I did not intend that this inexperience should embarrass me. A vibration of originality had always caused me to do things in a novel way. I decided to apply this trait to the management of my farm; not only because it might lead to hitherto unheard-of successes, but required less knowledge. It is easier and quicker to be original than experienced. New conditions make new customs. Do we not see elephants eat, glad to get, popcorn and roasted Virginia peanuts? Yet what astute Zulu or Siamese would have thought of offering raspberry popcorn or Virginia peanuts to the captured mammoth of the jungle? Verily, he would have given his Dark Continent laugh or his South-Sea guffaw to the suggestion. No, said I to myself; I will not let ignorance lead me astray to the paths of study. I shall be guided by intuition and, if anything else, logic. This shall be a Bohemian Farm, run on a strictly inspired basis.

Thus, in planting vegetables, I had a vague, sneak-

ing, contemptible idea of some special season being proper for each sort of seed. This I scorned as the gutterals of my baser nature, the taint of commonality that is in us all. My seeds should all be planted conveniently at the same time, and I would doubtless be eating strawberries when cabbages were the only other fresh fruit on the market. Nature would facetiously help me out. For, is it not one of Mother Nature's grandest attributes to adapt herself to circumstances? Of this principle most tillers of the soil are unaware. Did not the Grand Old Lady (Mrs. Nature) evolve statesmen and ring-tailed monkeys from that one same unlikely-looking critter, the missing link? Suppose that, millions of years ago, a pair of missing links should have come into the possession of an ordinary, medium-sized Melrose farmer; would he have had the forethought to breed statesmen from them? Or even ring-tailed monkeys? Decidedly no! But some one gave the link a chance. Hence, dear reader, you and I. And hence, I, a story-writer, a producer of fiction, would take Nature out of the rut, and ask her to work at all seasons of the year, rain or shine.

When the first leaf points should sparkle greenishly from the sod, of course their identity would be unknown to me. A prosaic or imitative mind would think of tabbing the whereabouts of each with a stake in the ground. Not I. My carrot seeds should be sown in the form of letters three feet square, to spell the word CARROTS. Each vegetable would spell itself as it emerged from earth. Some letters might appear sooner than others like the incandescent lights of an advertising sign, causing then the soul to speculate, until the whole world be displayed in verdure. This is a fine blending of literature and agriculture. In the rear was a rise in the ground,

which I sowed with sweet pea in the motto of my domain, PROCRASTINATION. They might, in time, grow luxuriantly, perhaps in ineligious yet fragrant publication of the word, and if "Procrastination" could not be read in the tangled vines, it could be smelled by anyone standing near the blossoms. Around them I provided a border of cucumbers, in honor of their proverbial coolness. This proverbial coolness would also make good salad.

Such rural innocence put me in some sympathy with the dog Rowdy, which I had bought in the City. Rowdy was a Gordon setter. He was an old-style Gordon, without modern improvements, in ideas or curve of the tail; wouldn't wear a collar, and had the peculiarity that he would never eat when anybody was looking. Only circumstantial evidence supported the fact that he devoured the miscellany he carried to a secluded spot. Rowdy like myself knew little of country affairs. He had never seen a chicken except in the form of scraps from the table; never beheld a cow save in the shape of a sirloin bone. It was to be pardoned in him, therefore, that when he first went sight-seeing among these bucolic brutes, he did not recognize them, misunderstood the situation, and scrambled after the chickens as if in vengeance of some ancient grudge. The hens on their part were adepts in the art of excitement, and harum-scarumed in such confusion that I thrilled lest they injure internally whatever eggs they were about to lay. When my fingers were finally clutched about Rowdy's neck, he struggled in righteous anger. But I gave him a beating that made him grovel like a serpent. From that moment, one of the great pleasures in Rowdy's life was watching these fowls. He would enter the enclosure, sit up and gaze at them like an old man

near boys at play. Frequently his eye would catch a leghorn, towards whose scratching and strutting his head would incline in studious wonder. When weary of one position, he would trot off to another, take his seat as before and resume the surveillance with all his canine soul. Often of mornings, when I went outside, there would be Rowdy watching the chickens at a distance and proudly airing his tongue.

On the day of this first poultry lesson, we continued our tour of inspection to the pasturage. I had desired to do something in literature that day, so as to lure the rural Muse from the beginning, yet felt the advisability of an early acquaintance with all my possessions. For unto the bull I had increased admiration ever since naming him Minotaur. Though lacking the half human make-up of the monster of Crete, he had all the grand, grisly malice of the Cretan bull; and only opportunity, it seemed, was needed to bring out his profoundly evil nature. To the cow I gave the appellation of Io. Her meditative expression, which I have previously noted, could not but suggest the melancholies of the girl whom Juno had wittily metamorphosed into a cow. The calf went by the simple name of Veal, though Bones or Slats might have described him more accurately. Veal was a sad case, with very little inside. He was shaped like a bicycle crate wrapped in a couch cover, but was much flatter on one side than the other, and grew to look more like a camel every day. The saddest part of it was his superabundant and superfluous jollity, acting, he did, as if inhabiting an earthly Paradise. I suspected Veal of not being right in his mind. He was more than absent-minded, lightheaded or humorous. The most charitable word that could be used for him is "eccentric." His susceptibility to playing tag and

hide-and-seek with every passing insect, leaf, piece of paper or apparition was not reassuring. He was getting too old for it. The time was approaching when he should be valuable for breeding purposes. He certainly was tall enough; taller than his father already. Yet, somehow, I predicted he would never look like a bull. Some constitutional depravity of his left eyelid caused it to droop with a most salacious wink; and his legs were toggle-jointed. Sell him for veal? He had hardly enough flesh to keep his bones in place, especially on the left side. Beholding Veal gambol on the green (yellow at that time of the year), I could not but think that with his every move he was gambling with Death, and that the silver cord of his life would be loosened or the golden bowl be broken. Still his backbone held together under the stress, though I sometimes thought it would fall out. The only explanation I could offer was that he was extra fine and strong in the gristle. However, he was distinctly not a literary man's cow. He could never pose as the Monarch of the Herd for my artist friends.

As soon as he saw Veal, Rowdy lay down to be whipped. He had sinned in thought and was conscience-stricken. In a spirit of kindness I bade Rowdy to arise and I petted him. Kindness is frequently misinterpreted. I am quite willing to believe that my act was mistaken by Rowdy in good faith. He may have interpreted my caress as meaning that the calf and I were sworn enemies and that he, Rowdy, being my ally, should do his duty. At any rate, he started after Veal without more ado than a limpid snort of joy.

I have seen the ablest and most grotesque farce-comedians of the day; have witnessed the burlesque

work of vaudeville artists who made audiences chuckle and throb down to their very stomachs and back. But never have I witnessed anything as funny as Veal's untutored efforts to escape. Nothing within the scope of human endeavor could approach it. I leaned against the barbed wire and laughed a farmful. The laugh dissolved when Minotaur took up the clew and followed his imperiled offspring. Minotaur's start was colossal. For a two-horned, bellowing introduction to a catastrophe, it was all that the heart could desire. As a calamity-howler, and the calamity with him, Minotaur was a success. There was a golden cloud of dust with a dark infusion of bull, as he glutted his lust for speed in Rowdy's trail.

Veal made as straight for the pig-pen as his ill-balanced carcass could go. As an exhibition of pure motion, without any affectation, it was extemporaneous, but none the less proficient. It was artless—almost piquant. The crash with which he struck the fence made me expect to see him snap into half a dozen fragments. There was an explosion of nails and splinters. Through it flew Veal. He did not snap. He was a contortionist. The fence gave way, and Veal was soon struggling amid the swine, with Rowdy chewing him into convulsions. He could scarcely have given more than seventeen fast chews when Minotaur roared into the muddy imbroglio. The next instantaneous tableau was like one of those upheavals of Nature in which man is powerless to intervene. The moment afterwards, Rowdy was sprawlily silhouetted against the pale blue sky and came to earth with a thud of astonishment. He looked around; then took up a position at my side. The rapidity with which Rowdy was learning evidently was going to be a strain on him. With humankind,

disaster oft follows curiosity; with Rowdy, it was impetuous disaster first, and subsequent curiosity enjoyed with leisure and calm.

Most people do not know that swine have fiery tempers. They are accredited, the pigs, with a sort of Chinese peacefulness. I did not foresee that they would offer any organized resistance to Minotaur's progress. I thought that, in their vulgar haste to save themselves, they might unintentionally get into his way. Their home was being invaded. Right was on their side. But Minotaur was not in an analytical mood. Three of the porks came out of the riot by the sky route—one of them gored beyond repair, and he fatly breathed out his last hold on the terrestrial atmosphere.

Minotaur's blood now had the furies. Following some red flag of aroused proclivities, he made his resounding way to the chicken yard. Through the wire screen fence he screwed, and when inside, made a circle of the arena. Here he had not long to wait for bloody business. Minotaur was scarcely within the fortifications of the feathered tribe when a large, flamboyant, all-colored rooster with flowing tail of Gobelin green and Tyrian purple, flew at him and with one dig of the spur, stripped open the bovine nostril, blood following.

The victor of the pig-pen stooped and pawed my part of Melrose.

"Go to it, O Hector of the scarlet helm," I yelled to the rooster.

Hector spread his wings and crouched. He had no thought of retreating. Behind him, the hens darted hither and thither, clucking in terror. On came Minotaur, with enough momentum to gore a lion. Hector, with comb red-swelling and translucent in the sun-

light, met the attack, but was carried backward about four bull-lengths. This distance he had ridden atop the bull's muzzle, scraping and spurring the soft nose, and with bill stabbing his antagonist about the eyes. He had only to alight at the end of the scrimmage.

Already the personal animosities among my domestic animals had cost me, in casualties one hog, and two fences among the injured. Two of my bravest were now fighting it out for supremacy. At the finish, no doubt, the courage and value of one of them would be depreciated. But the novelty of the conflict made me feel like a grand stand of spectators. Everybody was wild with excitement; everybody arose from their seats and glared at the fray. Then, as the two combatants stood opposed, ready for another rush, the whole grand stand, constituted by myself, arose as one man and shouted.

"Stay with it, O feathered Hector with the helmet comb!"

Rowdy danced around with delight, and barked furiously. The dust smoked between the cock and bull. Clucks, barks, bellows, gutterals, squeals, flutterings and upsettings of pans—more noise than a Chinese funeral—showed how the dumb brutes were worked up over this rural sporting event.

Minotaur was surprised; and Veal, probably for the first time in his life, looked sedate. Blowing the blood from his nostrils, rolling his eyes and larruping his tail, with lowered head the bull again made for the brilliant cock that in the sunlight shone as if made of many colored metals and shells. Minotaur's idea evidently was by added swiftness to horn his nimble adversary. But when the two came together again, Hector secured a foothold, gripping his claws into the bull's muzzle, tearing them with trenchant spurs an'

dawking the ox-eyes with rapid wing beats. It was useless for the quadruped to continue the engagement. He might as well have fought the south wind for all his attack was worth; in the meanwhile he was getting the worst of it.

Almost blinded, Minotaur took to flight, and the gaudy victor flew from the aggressor's nose as defeat plunged back through the wire screen.

Then Hector gave his college yell, went to a fence and cockodoodled himself the winner.

During the rest of the day I furthered Pacific Coast Literature by repairing fences and exercised my imagination by wondering what to do with the deceased hog.

Rowdy kept close to me. In his demonstrative way he was plainly saying, Isn't it great to live on a ranch?

THE BOMBASTIC FARMER.

One morning I was writing a story for McMunper's Magazine. After penning the first five lines, my thoughts began to fly to the utmost parts of earth and to unknown points of interest elsewhere. I seldom know where my thoughts go. Often they leave me in the morning without saying good-bye or telling when they will return. Frequently they stay out all night. They ramble through enchanted castles in mystic regions far from the world, where golden pottery discharges inspiring perfumes yet combined with odors that lull the delighted brain. There beautiful apparitions smile in the shades and vanish in the sun, while magicians tell poor authors where to find a cavern of gold.

One by one occurred these fancy flights until there was not enough thought left to write the next word of my story. I couldn't conjure the simplest phrase or think of a suitable preposition. So I went outside for a stroll on my grounds, that the creative mood might return to me.

Some people do not believe in a creative mood. I know there is one, because I have seen it abscond many a time. On this morning, I watched it leaping over the skyline, waving me adieu from the tip of its nose.

The country is ideal for such impracticable tendencies, even removing the sense of self-criticism. It is a pretty place where one can still his conscience by smelling a flower.

With my farm there was but one thing wrong; that was an old farmer who used to come and lean over my western fence. He was wont to lean his elbows on the

top rail and observe me. When his all-too-plain inquisitiveness was satisfied, he would withdraw. Almost every day he came to fulfill his curiosity; which must have been capacious, for he looked a curiosity altogether. From the hands that fumbled a pipe to the whiskers in his ears, he was curious. Barely over five feet in height and dirty as a potato. It grew on me that in the course of time I would have to become aware of this man's existence.

Walking up and down in a scientific manner and coming nearer to him at every turn, I at last drew up in surprise within a few feet of him and exclaimed: "Good morning!"

He nodded philosophically, as if the acknowledgement of my salute was acquiescing in something that required much wisdom to appreciate.

We joined in a few other simple views, with the same profundity on his part. Then he asked me:

"Had much experience at soiling cows?"

"Did you say spoiling?" I queried.

"No; soiling."

It was a queer word to use if he referred to Minotaur's nose. But he looked like a New Englander, and I thought this might be the right word in some dialectish hole of New Hampshire.

"No," I replied mysteriously; "I have not soiled many cows' noses; but I have soiled a few men's noses in much the same way."

He looked as if his previous opinion of my ignorance made astonishment inane; so added:

"If you're raising for the market, it's better to stall them than soil 'em."

Thus I learned the term for feeding cows from the soil.

"Perhaps," I remarked calmly in thankless return

for the word, "that's the matter with that calf of mine."

"O' course! Feed him on mangel-wurzels. That'll fix him in three weeks."

There it was again. I suspected mangel-wurzels to be a nonsense word that he had coined for a tender-foot's wonder. So I replied warily:

"Mangel-wurzels might fatten him on one side only; especially as he seems to have a predisposition that way."

"I'll come over and take a look at him," said McCracken, for such, O large and intelligent reader, I eventually found to be the name of my neighbor.

McCracken was an agricultural critic unequalled by any literary purist I had ever known. It was useless to argue with him that mine was a short-story farm, a literary acre, a Parnassian sod, where the vegetables were merely tolerated for their uses. Agriculture was to him the basic principle of the universe; and while he granted me privilege to write, regarded literature as a by-product of leisure, akin to whittling sticks.

McCracken's first objection to my premises was the soil. This he kicked indignantly, making profane comments at the condition of the sod as it spurted from his shoe-thrusts.

I protested that I had no hand in the creation of the world, and had not even looked on while Melrose was being made; so that it's soil was no fault of mine.

"Irrigation, man, and fertilizers! Can't you see your land needs dressing?"

"Do you mean to say that I should tamper with the Creator's handiwork and try to rehabilitate my part of the world?" I asked with warmth.

"Well, this part of the world might have been in-

berry or vanilla flavor?" I rejoined. "Wouldn't a little absinthe or brandy in the soil be a good thing? What wonderful invention an absinthe pineapple would be!"

"Too expensive for the market," said McCracken. "But the most expensive thing about pinnyapple growing is the spiky longleaf, which prevents them from growing at all. The leaves come long and curl in at the edges, choking off the new shoots. The plant lingers along for about two years and then dies, unless tanglefoot has killed it previously. Then they are liable to catch the mealy bugs and the red spiders or the scale, or they get the wilts. Anyway, their chances of life are small. You'd have as much chance with pinnyapples as an oyster in a pig-sty."

"Do you ever intend to leave this part of the country?" I asked of this soul-destroying pessimist.

"Yes; I'm going to leave. I figure on getting away from this part of the country in about five years. Then I'm going back to Iowa and grow wheat. Dad is getting pretty old now. He'll hardly last more'n five years. But he's good for that."

"You're very slow and sure in your calculations."

"Yes; I always go slow, and I calculate everything. It's better'n going too fast to see what you're doing. I'll never break a record and I'll never break my neck. But when I am on my deathbed, I can lay my hand on my heart and say I knew a whole lot about farming. Wait till I get some mangel-wurzels. I'll make that veal of yours take on weight before morning."

He went to his barn and returned with a basketful.

"They look like old-fashioned beets," said I.

"Some call them beets and some call them mangel-wurzels. Mangel-wurzels is what they are."

We repaired to the cow-yard, accompanied by Rowdy. McCracken put down his basket, went over to Veal and thumped him. Veal stood the diagnosis patiently. Rowdy threw himself into the air with hallelujatic transports on seeing Veal thus jabbed. He was yelping as near to the empyrean blue as he could, when Minotaur, with a roar and slap of the tongue, bore down on the basket, scattered the mangel-wurzels and proceeded quietly to eat one. McCracken brought one to Veal, while Io, with a soft lowing, put her nose against another. We watched her smell it for about a minute before she took a bite.

McCracken then went his way, and I to my story.

THE FATE OF MINOTAUR.

I intended, as soon as having sold a few stories and made the bungalow presentable, to entertain a few friends. The presentableness was not yet complete, when, one afternoon, returning from a walk along the Foothill Boulevard, I found this notice posted on my door.

WARNING! TAKE HEED!! BEWARE!!! There will be a house-warming on these premises next Sunday afternoon. All who are found within this bungalow will be entertained to death.

By order of the PINK HAND.

“Wouldn't that warm the cockles of your heart,” said I to Rowdy.

The cockles of the heart is a cardiac situation that must be highly interesting to all of us. What the cockles are, or how they look, I, in conjunction with many other honest folks, never knew. Nor had I ever heard of their having any other function than that so often referred to. The only act they are known to experience is to be warned. No one has ever spoken of the cockles of the heart as being cooled. Yet they must undergo some cooling process or eventually become so hot they would suffer combustion in the frequent warmings that a generous world gives them. However, in this case, without knowing just what the anatomical phenomenon consisted of, I felt the cockles of my heart duly going through their well known obligation of being warmed.

The spritesome Veal had already taken a long course of mangel-wurzels and, incredible as it may seem, gained about twenty-five pounds—worth about 8 cents a pound when dressed, a gain of about \$2,

and costing McCracken about \$3 in mangel-wurzels. Veal himself seemed astonished at the change, and lost that jaunty air with which he was wont to chase imaginary butterflies. His flanks filled out and his legs grew shapely. Frequently, when I entered the yard, he would gaze at me solemnly, as if to reprove me for the puzzling change that had been wrought in him. His calfhood days were drawing to a close, and McCracken was clamoring for his life. McCracken declared I had given Veal the only practical name on the farm, and described to me how finely he would split the carcass from throat to tail, remove everything except the kidneys and hang him up where I could cut off a leg or a few ribs, and he, McCracken, could get back the value of his mangel-wurzels. But I had already trained Veal to give a paw, or a hoof, and hated to think of a piece of him in the oven or a slice of him, cold-roast, on a plate. I knew that a dab of horse-radish over such portion of him would not obliterate the many fond memories and prankish ways of this young bovine. So I pleaded for clemency in Veal's behalf and offered to pay for what wurzels he had eaten.

On Sunday, shortly after noon, the members of the Pink Hand Band, true to their warning, assailed my bungalow, with many packages, which they unloaded in the kitchen. There were all sorts of useful and useless viands, glasses, plates and cigar trays; also a few bottles and decanters, to feast amid half of which would have been enough to give one the heart-burn; which is the second stage of warming the cockles of the heart. But the one who could do this with most despatch was not yet arrived, and I was relieved when told she was coming on the next train.

“Some one must go down to the train and meet

Clara," was a remark I fished up from a flood of voices.

"I wonder who that some one is," said I, putting on my hat.

The local was just bumping into the mid-section of Melrose when I came alongside to assist Clara from the steps.

"Oh, goody, goody, you haven't grown a beard; and you wrote me you had," she exclaimed.

"Is that all you notice about me?"

"And you are not all full of holes where the bull hooked you."

"Is that all?"

"And you don't carry samples of wild oats in your hair."

"Those," I reminded her, "are things that are not. What is that which is?"

"Well, what?"

"Don't you observe my fine coat of tan?"

"You had that in the City, and vest and trousers too."

"It seems to be," said I, "that you are unduly frivolous at beholding the fine hue of glowing health with which Nature has tinted my ardent young cheeks and made me illustrate the heritage of strength which is mine."

"Oh, I thought you looked a trifle pale."

"Though you are not observant, you might at least be generous," I rejoined. "Did I come to the country to look pale? Do I repair fences, climb to the roof of the bungalow to stop up leaks, crawl down perilously to prohibit a fight among my domestic animals, breathe all the fresh air I can, and feed on the nutritious products of the soil, merely to look pale? Nay, not so."

Clara had a temperament in which I interested myself at first to see if she could be induced to praise anything. Her approbation was as difficult to raise as pineapples in snow. After studying her for about a year, I made a fad of remembering her innocent aloofness, and later found it difficult to give up the study.

She had a fondness for all manners of danger, always insisting that dangers are but imaginary. When brought face to face with her peril, after the most detailed warnings from everybody, she would manifest paroxysmal surprise at the outcome and claim to have been deluded by something or other.

I remember the time she would not believe that slow and cautious practice is necessary before making a headlong dash on roller skates. I recall the occasion when she had no faith in the principle that rocking a boat will upset it. I recollect when she confidently made lunches of such odds and ends as pink and green salads, rainbow ice-cream, sparkling lemonade, gaudy candies and ornate cakes. Her way out of all these difficulties was the shortest and quickest; and she was a spectacular if not an efficient sprinter.

When we arrived at the farm, Clara could not be induced to go around to the front gate, but must short-cut it through the cow-field.

"Bulls never hook unless you're afraid of them," she asserted.

At that moment, Minotaur turned and saw us.

"Will he hook?" whispered Clara.

"Whatever a bull ever did, Minotaur will do," I attested.

"If he hooks, take him by the horns," she advised. "Everybody knows that if you take a bull by the horns he is conquered."

"That," said I, "is for a man with plenty of time.

I wouldn't care to hold a bull by the horns all afternoon while his temper is cooling."

Minotaur took several steps towards us.

He had hardly done so, when, Clara, with a victimized shriek, fled, accelerating her departure with long repetitions of her strating cry. It brought the crowd of house-warmers to the rear of the bungalow.

"Here, you bull," said I, assuming a commanding tone; "lie down!"

Minotaur never did have the proper respect for me. He now began to bellow with the seeming intention of frightening me off the field. I recollected his tossing of the pigs and Rowdy, and now was he desirous of substantiating his claim to the championship of the farm by defeating me. But I would not run from a brute that had had to scuttle from the assault of a barnyard rooster. Besides, the look in his eye was so malignant that I felt, should I run, I would lose all mastery over him and the fun of owning him be lost forever.

All this I thought in a few seconds; upon which, Minotaur charged at me with genuine fervor. I jumped aside, but drew my revolver in anticipation of his closer aim. He was a fairly valuable bull, and, at another time, I might have felt constrained to save the life of my property by running away with my own. But at that moment, something almost human and Minotaurish in his rolling eye and ponderous roar, angered me. It was the climax of the struggle between the human and the brute creation. And all that went through my mind in another second.

On he came. I gave him a last chance.

"Whscrowk!" I hollered, meaning that he should back down.

I would use gentleness with him to the last. I in-

tended to convey to him that it was his duty as a brute to desist in his attack. I kept my finger on the trigger. If I could get the idea gently into his head—very well; if not, I would rid him of his own pestiferous ideas by blowing out his whole brainful. Either way suited me as I dodged from his mutinous onslaught.

He came again, and I fired. The ball splashed between his eyes.

Minotaur tumbled to the sod.

I looked for Clara. She had just cleared the fence and was still running and screaming. Before I took the hurdle, she had already passed the beer bottle at the head of Appian Way and was making towards Pegasus Alley, which still extended to the legs of the same horse in the same back yard.

I hurried after the girl and roared for her to stop; but with my every roar, she increased her speed and shriek. Finally I caught up, lay my hand on her shoulder and brought her to a standstill. She gave a yell and fell into my arms.

“What’s the matter?” I asked hoarsely. “Why didn’t you stop when I called you?”

“I thought you were the bull,” whispered Clara.

“Yonder lies the bull.”

“He looks dead.”

“I had to kill him.”

“With a blow of your fist?” She beheld me proudly.

“No; I had to shoot him.”

“Oh, what a shame! He never hurt anybody. Maybe he was only trying to fool us.”

“One can’t meditate upon those things when only a fraction of a second is given him.”

“What a red shame!” resounded from the red

mouths of all my guests on our return. "Why didn't you run away?"

"It is useless to expostulate now," I replied. "The bull is dead; long live the bull." And I patted Veal on the head—Minotaur II, who was, with Io, gloating over the deceased sire. I continued: "He would have killed somebody, perhaps a talented person, sooner or later. I had long made up my mind to have that bull for dinner."

"You can't eat a bull," interposed Clara.

"You can't, eh? Well, just watch me. I'll eat that bull if I have to crunch each mouthful fifty-seven times. Or, if I cannot eat him, McCracken can. You don't know neighbor McCracken. He'll be able to eat that bull if it can be eaten at all. McCracken can do anything about a farm. If he doesn't eat every decent part of Minotaur, I'll have lost faith in scientific agriculture. Let it come to the worst, and I'll grow pineapples and use Minotaur for fertilizer. Blood and bone, you know (no; of course you don't know; you are ignorant of agricultural methods)—but they make ammonia, which flavors the pineapples."

"I think he is right," said Clara, firmly.

Several entered the kitchen to prepare the banquet. I showed others around the establishment.

"These animals, to your right," I said, "are pigs, sometimes called hogs. In agricultural communities, such as you now behold, they are termed swine. From swine, we get many valuable articles, such as pork, lard, bacon, ham and eggs, pig's feet, etc. Sausage is one of the largest industries in which swine are interested. The sows' ears are used largely in the manufacture of silk purses. These brutes are stubborn and have great will power. Out of their will power, pig-iron is made.

“On your left is the chicken park. I have made a special study of fowls and found them worthy of pursuit. In my young days, restaurant proprietors used to inform me that the only edible parts of the chicken are the gizzard and leg. This is an exploded theory.”

Suddenly a young woman came running out of the house crying “The bungalow’s on fire!”

How quickly a few words can make one feel different and change his sportive tongue.

In a trice we all seemed whipped by fiends. Immediately we were in the kitchen, where the garbage pail full of wrapping paper was ablaze. The tablecloth was flaming. A heap of boxes in which the visitors had brought dainties were mixed in the tiny conflagration. One of the men had endeavored to use his coat to extinguish the tablecloth, and both were burning. (Not the man and the tablecloth, but the tablecloth and coat.) Just as I entered, a lamp was knocked over and its kerosene setting afire the wall below the window.

Four men were trying to draw water with one bucket from the sink faucet. I made a dash to get the garden hose, and was speeding outside the doorway when Rowdy got between my legs, twisted me around and I fell to the floor of the veranda. Rowdy gave a yelp and went. As two sweet-cheeked young women helped me up, I heard one of them say:

“Poor fellow!”

To which the other responded: “And he was so proud of his bungalow, too!”

Turning to look, I saw the whole westward wall of the kitchen in the upward flow of the yellow, liquid-like flames.

I sped to the barn, where I found the hose had been

screwed so long to the faucet that six mighty and superhuman efforts were required to release it. Hurrying back with the coil, I was confronted with a sort of darkness in the kitchen.

"What happened to the fire?" I cried.

They all pointed to McCracken. He held a long red tin tube, whose contents he had cast at the incipient calamity. It was a patent fire extinguisher.

Good old McCracken! Knew everything. Did everything. I could see at once that he was the kind of a man always at hand in an emergency. A frowsy, ugly, old bearded Alexander that went through life cutting the Gordian knots of his friends.

"It came near being another and unexpected sort of house-warming," said Clara. "I didn't know those matches jump so when you light them. I'll never light one of that brand again."

"It looked like curtains for the bungalow," was the remark of a poet standing near me.

"If the bungalow had been burned to the ground, it would not have needed curtains," said I.

But we house-warmed during the rest of the afternoon, with the assistance of McCracken, who knew as much about the subject as any of us. At night we marched over with lanterns and warmed his house. Three times we made him stand on a chair and relate how he had put out the fire. He had started to tell it for the fourth time when we coursed back to the cow-yard and held a war-dance with Japanese lanterns around the body of Minotaur I, with elaborate ceremonies consigning his corporal remains to McCracken and his soul to the Elysian Fields.

In resumption, I may state that house-warming is an excellent mental stimulus and leaves many tender memories. But for the first day or two afterwards,

such aspects are not noticeable; they do not at once take definite form. This interval is overcast with mysterious lassitude. There is also a dull, unaccountable repentance, as if for deeds committed in a former existence. We go through the house, gazing out the windows, taking to couches, sprawling on chairs, and ever and anon engulfing glassfuls of water with such greed that considerable of the liquid trickles down the neck and makes life appear in a bad light. We rest our head on our cool hand until the hand becomes hot too, and then we try another position. There seems to be no place in the world adequate for the accommodation of this very same head. We eat because we think the world needs us yet and it would only be selfishness on our part not to take sustenance, and use all possible means to retain it. The faces of friends, in the distorted imagination, are ugly, as we wonder what they will say when they see us again.

House-warming is not a necessary adjunct to the breeding of cows and the raising of vegetables. Yet, on the whole, it improves the mind and gives a literary touch to the commonplace habit of passing the bread.

AN INTERRUPTED STORY

Gilsey was a reporter. He and I had once worked, smoked and cursed our Stygian luck on the same newspaper.

Having lost his job, through a misunderstanding (the misunderstanding was this: Gilsey's City Editor had detailed him on a political story; the City Editor's idea was that Gilsey should cover the story with all decent expedition; but Gilsey, under a misapprehension and feeling that all political matters drag horribly, proceeded to while away what he considered surplus time at a nearby whiskey counter, where, in the course of a few hours, he forgot whither he had been sent)—anyway, having lost his job, Gilsey wrote me, begging all possible pardons, but pointing out what a felicitous deed I would perform by returning him the fifty cents I had borrowed a year before, and, should I feel so hilarious as to top the repayment with an extra half dollar, he thought he would be able to play twiddle twaddle with starvation for a few days. As with most reporters, emergencies usually trapped him without enough money to pay the funeral expenses of a dead certainty; understand? At such times, he would have about thirty-five cents.

So I invited Gilsey to be fresh-aired and country-fed for a week or two at Procrastination Farm, but suggested to him, on arrival, that he play not too strongly on the motto as it hung in my studio. As for the word, "Procrastination," planted in sweet peas, the seeds, presumably having taken the motto to themselves, had not yet appeared.

He came on a Wednesday afternoon. I remember it was Wednesday because Gilsey burlesqued the man-

ners of his former co-scribes perhaps at that very moment of payday entering the local room with their weekly envelopes.

We were filling the room full of tobacco smoke and dreams. I had a pipe and gave Gilsey a cigar whose band was as glorious as a championship belt. At effulgent ease, I sat and smiled over the twelve-hued Smyrna carpet, the dark ponderous furniture, the glimmering portiers, statues white and bronze, and many other objects common in uncommon places, and which Fancy said would be in my rooms as soon as I should realize on the tragedy in blank verse which I had been writing an hour a day. I would have liked to devote more time to it, but could not afford to do so. Art pleaded, but Necessity would not allow more. Necessity is the stepmother of literary invention.

Gilsey worked the cigar muscles of his face and poured out another glassful. I soon saw that Gilsey's chief claim to my friendship, as on previous occasions in the City, would consist of drinking my wine and calling me a fool. Sometimes I had no wine, and sometimes I acted quite sensibly; he stuck to me in either case, though the shock (especially in the former) was severe. But now and then I wondered, should I give up wine and folly at the same time, what would become of Gilsey. In defense of myself, I must say that every man who had an established home and income, and who notwithstanding entertained one particle of discontent or found a word of fault against the universe, Gilsey despised as a fool of the lowest type.

Setting down his glass, the ex-reporter drawled: "Put that tragedy at the bottom of an old trunk and go to work on a hot melodrama, with fire-engines and

explosions and bridges and horse races and prison cells."

"It would be playing thunder and buttermilk with my reputation," I replied.

"My dear friend," he rejoined, "the larger part of your fame, especially as to poetry, rests with me; and, as I promise you not to be a fickle public, you may confidently go ahead on something profitable. In the meanwhile I shall not forget your genius."

The word "profitable" is alluring even when coming from the lips of a hartless critic.

"Gilsey, your influence comes like a green caterpillar on a pink rose. Yet I may write one melodrama."

He said: "Blank verse is well and good for college graduations, when everybody is feeling sad and dignified; but it is not an institution where a man takes his lady until it is time for a 11 o'clock supper."

"I did not know that boon to be the big squash in drama," said I, extra dryly.

"Then melodrama is real life," he pursued.

"All except the happy ending," mused I.

"Happy endings are the life of the soul," was his view of it.

In a little while I lit another pipeful and queried, "What do you think of this for a plot?"

"Let's hear it; but don't make it too fancy."

Heedless of this traverse, I began:

"It happened in California—in a one-story, gable-roofed village between a railroad track and a hay-press."

"Good!" exclaimed Gilsey, with more enthusiasm than I had assessed him for.

"The first scene opens in a wheat field. The heroine enters with two friends. One of them is Spanish

at a glance; the other, French at a wink; while the heroine is, of course, everything that is desirable, as both the hero and the villain well know. She is a clever girl, a graduate of the Stanford University, and sings in a sweet *Palo alto*."

"Here, now," muttered Gilsey. "I came from there."

"The hero enters, winks at Babette, takes in Carmencita at a glance and, observing Louise—well, no one could look at Louise without feeling he had never loved before."

"Great!" moaned Gilsey.

"You see, she is so beautiful that they have called her the 'Lady of the West,' and such is the name of the melodrama. Her hair is gold-hued as the nuggets that come from the mines. She is essentially a Western Girl. In the light of midday, miles of yellow wheat reflect the light of the sun upon her widely-admired cheek. The red-yellow poppies throw their humbler glow upon her feet. From top to bottom the girl stands in the manifold gleams of the Golden State. The wheat, the poppies, the gold and the sun not only bend their yellow illumination against her, but even penetrate her soul and make her inwardly a child of the West. Her eyes and her skies are blue."

"Fine!" roared Gilsey, sinking lower in his chair and spilling cigar ashes in his wine. That's worth \$10,000 in four acts."

His words made me jubilate. Fancy put up its radiant umbrella to ward off the shower of gold. A clairvoyant thrill from heart or solar plexus played in premonition of profits. It was as if the Tenth Muse (the tutelary goddess of Western Literature) was about to do a buck-and-wing incantation for my prosperity.

What is so cheering as the praise of a pessimist, even though he be intoxicated. Here was Gilsey, whom I was beginning to nickname mentally as the Plum-gouger of Melrose, thumping me on to success. The wreath of drama was just being felt comfortably set on my brow, when, a moment later, its green laurel curled and rotted and fell.

McCracken entered suddenly.

"Is this the editor of the Melrose Weekly Pumpkin News?" asked Gilsey, in a discontented rumble.

"Say, neighbor," began McCracken, "I think there's hog cholera in your sty."

"Hog cholera!" I exclaimed as the panorama of wealth collapsed temporarily.

"What makes you think it is hog cholera?" asked Gilsey, with the charming intimacy and inquiring mind of a reporter.

"Well, it might be swine plague, but I think it is hog cholera," answered McCracken.

Gilsey turned to me, grumbling: "I don't see what difference that should make to you. Plague on the pigs and their hog cholera. Go on with the story. As for me, whether it is hog cholera or swine plague doesn't matter a flip—I'm proud to say.

I questioned the harbinger of evil: "How do you distinguish between the hog cholera and the swine plague?"

"It's this way: In some circumstances they're about as much alike as hogs and swine. It's hard to tell until after they're dead."

"Good!" chuckled Gilsey. "Wait until they are dead and then hold a post mortem examination. Be scientific."

"What are the symptoms?" I asked McCracken.

"Yesterday afternoon, I noticed that the hogs had lost their appetite."

Gilsey sat up in his chair. After staring at me in wild wonder, he delivered himself of the following:

"Great peppermints! What sensible man, what gentleman of culture and refinement would be mentally disturbed by the fact that a pig had lost its appetite? Perhaps it's the dawn of their better natures; perhaps they have overloaded their seventh stomachs. For my part I should consider it a cause of rejoicing."

"Their breathing is out of order; all your hogs are coughing," added the farmer.

"Maybe it is the croup," Gilsey suggested. "Or the whooping cough. If it's the whooping cough—by heck! There's a rush of luck to my bazoo, and I'll be lassoed for a lallapaloosa if I don't photograph them and get up a Sunday story. A pig with the whooping cough! Great scoops! Funniest thing ever, or I'm dreaming. I'll make \$25 out of this. A whooping-cough scoop! A whooping hog! Say, I'm glad you got this farm; I'll get many a story out of it."

"Pigs don't have whooping cough," McCracken advised. Vivid with love of the soil, he faced the reporter like an earth god blasting a mortal.

The reporter refused to feel blasted. He addressed the other

"Friend, you are not in sympathy with journalism. I saw at once that you are not a newspaperman, though I at first suspected you of being a rural editor, merely on account of your presence here. It is not necessary for these interesting creatures to have the whooping cough from a medical, but from a Sunday Supplement standpoint. All that they must do is to assume the positions and perform the duties and an-

tics of whooping. Think of it!"—turning to me—"How many are there? Five? Five pigs stretching their damned throats to heaven, opening their Bacchanalian snouts and whooping it up in innocent and diabolical consternation! Suffering porkchops! Imagine their clumsy efforts interpreting the internal confusion as exemplified in the novel basso profundo effects of their voices. Snuffle, snuffle, grunt, grovel—whoop! What a picture! Is there anything else worthy of note?" he again questioned McCracken.

That disgusted person gave his reply to me: "They're acting dull and stupid."

Gilsey bounded from his chair. "Ha! This is too devilish good! Beautiful, beautiful! The pigs are dull and stupid. Say, what kind of hogs are they, anyway, in their normal condition? With what intellectual diversions do they usually pass their time? Oh! I had forgot. They are a literary man's pigs. I suppose you read poems to them every morning, treat them to Greek orations in the afternoon and play moonlight sonatas near the sty at night. But now their hamfat spirits are back-sliding. Now, alas, they are dull and stupid." And Gilsey put his elbow on the mantel, to laugh it out with himself.

However, I had to forget "The Lady of the West," and we set out for the sty. Our feet, eloquent with apprehension, spoke their sorrowful way on the ground, as our tongues trod the airs of discussion, with a cure for hog cholera the destination of our hopes. My neighbor and I were, of course, grave as all scientists are, while Gilsey, my wine-fellow of a few minutes ago, trailed along in lugubrious jollification, advising spirits of ammonia and soothing syrup for the victims' physical palliation, and sachet powders for their subtler senses.

After inspecting the patients, we went to town and bought a mixture. It was ineffective.

Within a few days, in spite of the sulphur, sodiums and charcoal fed to the sufferers on McCracken's prescribing, four of the five went to the Valley of Shadows. One shoat survived the Pandemonium. The corpses were cremated in their sty. We piled logs over them and set fire to the whole structure.

Pig-raising as an industry was thus eliminated from my day's routine. It was probably for the best, as they were not inspiring.

The convalescent shoat we gave a carbolio acid bath and every comfort. He never became fatty and pig-like; his form was stunted; his mind apparently reminiscent. I built a kennel for his lodging, and he boarded on the European plan where he happened to be, in and about the farm. He liked wheat and corn mainly. On occasions I nourished him with patent breakfast foods, daintied him with fancy crackers and predigested foods. He became quite a pet. Sometimes, to sustain his interest in life, I gave him portions from the table, which he accepted if not with good manners at least with good will. Sometimes a bowl of wine or beer or whiskey mash went his way; all in all he was the most stylishly kept pig I knew of. Rambling about the grounds at will, subject only to Rowdy's admonishing bark, Pig soon learned that the right to muzzle over foliage and prospect for juicy roots was not his. He was a favorite with visitors, especially those who were the least hoglike—I mean the ladies, who took his grunt as a sign of the most delicious intelligence.

Ungainly quadruped, survivor of a fivefold belly-ache that exploded the ideals and reals of thy noble kinspigs, the world offers its temporary standpoint to

thy lonely feet. O leaflard pig! O like us all in the winds of eternity, more light as a leaf than important as lard. Tread softly the dangerous earth. For thy life is the heirloom of all the swine that wallowed in these muse-haunted environs. Long life and joyful grunts to thee! And when the time comes that thou must wobble into oblivion, and shouldst thou come to be a pig in another world, tell thy comrades that antimony sulphide is not an infallible remedy for hog cholera, or swine plague, and to put all their hopes in metempsychosis, eternal change and the great mystery.

THE EFFECT OF A MOSQUITO ON SOCIALISM.

I once thought that farming consisted mostly of being sturdy, honest and gathering in the crops while travelers in the overland trains waved their handkerchiefs from the car windows. Waiting for rain also had something to do with it. Later, I found that a successful crop-gatherer must be a microbe-hunter, a bug-student, an architect, a chemist, a veterinary surgeon, a geologist and what is called a good loser. After some trials, I was able to fulfill the latter requirement superbly.

Still, the way I destroyed precedents and results at the same time was not all my own fault. In the first place I wish to say that there is something wrong with the earth on which we live; not as a world, but as mere earth, sod, soil. For instance, certain edible roots having been planted in the form of the word, CAR-ROTS, why should only CAR have emerged from the ground? And what had become of ROTS? Had the mischief been entirely mine, nothing at all should have grown from the seeds, as all had the same benefits at the start. But there was CAR, and ROTS unevdenced save by insinuation. Of CABBAGES, only part of a syllable, BA arose to view. And of SUNFLOWERS, only OW. It was the science of McCracken, who knew them at sight, that enabled me to decipher the bewitched words. And right here I'll say a good word for potatoes. I had at Procrastination Farm the finest potatoes in the world. That was one consolation. McCracken planted them, accidentally in the right place, and nothing ever harmed them.

My chickens were a dare-devil herd, forever squabbling among themselves. Did one of them find a worm,

a riot immediately ensued, and for a while it was like flying hatpins, although I gave them all they could gorge of wheat, corn, table scraps, crushed oyster shells AND mangel-wurzels. Besides, they had an alfalfa playground to themselves. Nevertheless, one little worm of discord, and I could hear the clatter of conflict from my writing table; then would have to lay off work and separate the combatants. No wonder the rooster had whipped a bull; he was head of a fighting tribe.

There was another food to which these hens were very much attached, and that was newly-laid eggs. I had never heard of chickens eating raw eggs. I fancied they produced these nutritious objects for man's use and the propagation of their own species. But oft at dewy eve, going out to collect the oviform deposit of this well-fed pampered poultry, I would find one-twelfth of a dozen intact and a mess of empty shells. At first I did not suspect the blackguards. I inferred that a gopher or other foul varmint had sneaked into the nests. And I resolved, should he be arrested and convicted, there would be a public execution in presence of all the live stock. But once upon a time I lay for the intruder and beheld my own hens guzzling the yolks and eating part of the shells in an attempt to destroy the evidence of crime.

"McCracken," said I one day, "I hate to be tapping the fountain-head of your wisdom so often; but tell me, is it the duty of a farmer to watch his hens all day and at the dramatic moment snatch the egg from their greedy maws? Must I bring my work into the chicken palace and wait for the triumphant cluck that heralds another egg has seen the light of day?"

"The egg-eating habit in chickens," said he, "is a pernicious one and hard to break."

"All pernicious habits are."

"The whole trouble lies in the fact that your nests were built wrong in the first place. You see, some hens fight for the possession of a nest, an egg is broken in the skirmish; then they experiment with the inside and find it good to eat."

"Ah, I see! There has always been considerable ill feeling in that flock."

We went to the scene of infamy. Two fowls were in the nests. Along came a Mother Grundy sort of a leghorn and, instead of entering one of the unoccupied boxes, went right for the one in which a black hen was squatting in egg-laying bliss. There was a scuffle, and shortly afterwards, the leghorn was mistress of the straw. The black one, trembling and clucking with rage, flew into a box where sat another layer. A short, snappy discussion followed; then a fracas, and the intruder was cast out.

"An egg there, and you'd a' lost it," muttered McCracken.

"What shall I do?" I hoped he would tell me to do havoc and carnage, or something that could be done with a hatchet.

"Open up the boxes, put them further apart, and if there must be fighting, give them plenty of room. Also give them eggshells to eat, and maybe in time they'll break off their habit."

"Oh, I'll give them all the eggshells they can use."

In a short time, after nabbing the chief offender, and serving her up in the form of a stew, some of which I gave to Rowdy and Pig, matters became so prosperous in the hennery that I was able to trade eggs for coffee at the Melrose grocery store. This was my first resplendent success as a producer.

I may now record what amounted almost to a night-

mare at Procrastination Farm. It was the very delirium tremens of agriculture; to wit: bugs. In wandering about the grounds one day, I found a black beetle and gave it to the rooster as a peace offering. Not long after that, beetles were found ambushed under every stone and clump of earth. Other insects appeared in large forces. I think that my acre in Melrose was the most insecty place on the face of the globe. Often it was gorgeous with the hues of their wings. There were ants that marched in caravan. Now and then the air was filled with the gentle thunder of bees. Butterflies, grasshoppers, ladybugs—my plants were jeweled with them. Horseflies were numerous, though I kept no horse.

The cucumber and melon vines became afflicted with yellow spots and curlycues, thus teaching me the game of downy mildew and leafblight. Dodder curled all over the alfalfa.

The only, pure, unsullied part of my farm, outside of McCracken's potatoes, was the sky. And this, too, taking into consideration that I never took the slightest care of it. I never had to hoe or rake the sky; never fertilized, never irrigated it. And yet the sky over my farm was as beautiful an azure as over any spot in Melrose. Of course, whenever I found any chicken-hawk or wild ducks flying across my empyrean, I shot them at once. But this was sport and much more edifying than squirting kerosene into the two peach trees for the caterpillars hibernating or the moths picnicking in every nook.

No foreboding of such pests had come to my dreams of a country bungalow. They were not the necessary game of a story writer. I hated to rush out in the denouement of a plot to spend three days saving the life of a gourd or a watermelon. It was irksome, when

guiding my heroine through a beautiful scene, to have her turn in the powerful description and remind me that the grasshoppers might at that moment be abducting my last cabbage. As my hero sat in a gilded drawing-room telling witty stories to the ladies, he would give me a glance over his shoulder and say, "Remember the tomatoes, old boy; I'll wait here for you."

I wished that some Entomological Society or Professor of Bugs would visit my realm, as more data could be obtained in my back yard than in traveling over all the rest of the country. I myself knew more about gnats than any one outside of the gnats themselves. It took me but a few days to become the greatest gnaturalist in the world. And the most comical-phizzed grasshoppers that ever stood in solemn thought did so on my grounds and on my desk.

For instance, now, what student of natural history knows that when ladybugs commit suicide, they jump sideways into an inkwell? Or that when rescued they crawl up your sleeves and have an epileptic fit in the soft part of your forearm? What other insect observer would dream a spider is so stupid as to spin his web in an egg-beater, and that when you purpose to teach him a lesson by making that contrivance revolve with rapidity, he will be hurled into a pan of milk? Who ever heard that a beetle has such inquisitive instincts it will crawl to a point on the ceiling directly overhead and drop onto your book to see what you are reading. We know the passion of the moth for the flame. But who else has known a hundred moths to hide in a Japanese lantern all day waiting for the candle to be lit at night? Think of the hostility of bees that failing to sting to death the cuckoo of a clock,

made honey inside the case and stopped up the cuckoo with wax.

These things I have known and are common in the husbandry at Procrastination Farm.

They remind me of the time that Ernest Woods paid me a visit. Woods was a Socialist and had just been running a Socialist Weekly. After running it to the ground, his theories soared to less worldly ethers than ever.

Woods was tall and lank, wore a black suit, black slouch hat, flowing black necktie and a black frown. His mouth was wide as a propoganda, his nose a diatribe on the evils of wealth.

I entertained him on the veranda, for he wished to be near to Nature, having become disgusted with mankind. During his career as a journalist, more thrifty than most of his kind, he had saved up \$4, he said, and being simple in his habits was in no danger of Actual Want. Actual Want was the only thing in the world admitted by him to be an excuse for unhappiness. He always calculated the ills of mankind from that basis. Just as every science and creed must begin with some axiom, faith or assumption, so Woods' philosophy took Actual Want for its foundation. And it was a first-rate foundation for a castle in the air.

Woods was willing to work for a livelihood, but desired to reform the world before laboring in it.

"The way this world goes on now," he averred, "I would not give one beautiful dewdrop for all its luxuries. I would not barter one drop of peaceful manhood to take part in its most prized and glittering infamies. As long as I have the price of a loaf of bread, I shall refrain from doing a stroke of work in the debauched industries of our present social system. Of course, when a man comes to Actual Want, he is a

prisoner and must obey the law or die. If I had a hundred dollars I'd put the 'Socialist News' on a solid footing again. But I have not, and I'll have to make a solid footing for my contentment instead.

"I'll tell what's the matter with this world. It is, believe me, lost in a rank labyrinth of gaudy, stinking, smug hypocrisy, that fills its places like an overgrowth of poisonous tropical plants. And, until that is removed, I shall refuse to enter into the scheme. I refuse to join the illusion of riches. We are not rich except with a plenitude of sins. And I'll tell you the truth, I'm not indolent; I'd like to work if conditions were fit to work in."

He sat as defiant as if sitting were the most characteristic position a wise man could assume. With knees far forth and feet folded under his chair, he enjoyed his pipe, his opinions and the horizon. I had a very fine horizon from my veranda.

"Woods," I vouchsafed, "what you need is physical exercise. You have allowed yourself to grow grisly with a too profound look at the truth. A little honest or even dishonest excitement would be good for you; it might change your whole view of life."

"I don't want to change it," he retorted very quickly. "I wouldn't risk anything that might bring about a change."

"You might be inspired to greater logic."

"No," he replied sadly; "don't say that. I can't alter the truth; and no one, I venture to say, can alter it for me."

Just then Woods struck himself a solid slap on the back of the neck, for the mere purpose, I fancied, of giving grotesque emphasis to his statement, until I saw a magnificent specimen of thoroughbred mosquito wing itself away.

"Say, that's a horrible feeling," he cried, jumping to his feet. I wouldn't live out here, rent and tobacco free. How do you stand it? I wonder if your mosquitoes are the yellow-fever kind. The one that stung me must have risen from the Swamps of Tartarus. Filthy, blood-sucking pest. Symbol of the Capitalist Class. When I get back to the City I'll stay there. A man knows what he's getting anyway. He can select his troubles in the City and not find them suddenly tapping his lifeblood. Look at that flock of mosquitoes heading this way! Let's go in."

We entered the bungalow, where Woods applied whiskey to the lump on his neck.

"Do you know what I've a mind to do?" he asked.

"What's that?"

"I've been offered a position soliciting advertisements for a society paper in San Francisco. I don't know which one it is; but a friend of mine, running an advertisement bureau, says he can show me how to make \$5 a day, if I'm willing. Maybe it is a good thing, just to show the world what I can do."

"I think it would be," said I.

In about an hour he repented and said he would not fool with the proposition at all. He was a pessimist again, sitting in his chair as doleful as the Sands of Time run out.

Still, I thought that two or three more slaps on the neck would have established the circulation of his blood and made him an active citizen. The mosquito cure for discontent has never been given a fair trial.

DEBATE BETWEEN A REPORTER AND A FARMER

One afternoon I was feeling under the weather and was vainly trying to get on top, when Gilsey arrived with the declaration that it was his day off.

"I was under the impression that all your days are off," said I.

"No. Been working on the 'Chronicle.' Here's a canary bird I brought for you. Got it for nothing from a guy I interviewed. I knew you ought to have some sort of a something to eat up all the chickweed that grows around here. Nothing should go to waste on a farm."

"Now, I shall have to get a cat," said I. "It would be upsetting traditions to have a canary without a cat to gaze up at it wistfully."

"Won't the pig do?" Gilsey suggested. He smiled out the window, where the highly civilized pig was acting with unusual animation.

"Did you ever find out," Gilsey continued, "whether it was hog cholera or swine plague that carried off your swillivorous quadrupeds?"

"No; I lost interest after their demise."

He went to the window. "Say," he ejaculated, "there's something wrong with the survivor of all your pigs. Acts drunk."

I looked.

"How is it," queried Gilsey, "that every time I come here, I have to assist at the medical treatment of part of your menagerie? First your hogs got the tomestone stomachache. Then your chickens took the gapes. Your mosquitoes, led by one of them demagogues, tried to break up the government. Your cucumbers got the mumps. Now the Pig of Melrose

apparently has the willies, though I suppose that scientific McCracken friend of yours wouldn't call it by that name. Say, how do you write, anyway? Don't you have to go to a neighboring ranch to get up a fifteen-minute inspiration? I believe Nature has the St. Vitus Dance around here."

We went out to see the pig; which perturbed animal, descreying us, immediately scudded towards Gilsey, who leapt over him.

"Piggiwig's nuzzle is all red and inflamed, and his trotters and tail have a crimson tint. And he's delirious; no doubt about that. Looks like scarlet fever. Call McCracken," said the reporter, with a show of compassion.

I went for the wisest of them all, who came and ambled towards the frenzied porker.

"Poisoned!" cried McCracken.

The reporter took a sheet of copy paper from his pocket.

"I hate to work on my day off, but I wouldn't miss this," he said. "What is the name of this pig? Ah! Just Pig. That's interesting." He made notes. "How many miles from Melrose Station is this? Uh huh! Educated pig. Runs about the house and grounds like a dog, or as near like a dog as he can. Comes from an unfortunate family. All his known relations died from the effects of the hog cholera or swine plague—experts are in doubt which. Even the Nestor of Melrose was confounded, or was it dumbfounded—well, no matter. Could grunt 'yes' and squeal 'no;' smoked a pipe and was fond of tenderloin of sole if cooked a la Italienne. Poisoned! Pathetic. Infamous deed. Some unfeeling scoundrel—identity unknown. Crime unparalleled for peculiarity in the annals of Melrose.

I wonder if death will occur in time for me to catch the last train for the City."

McCracken noticed some dry red leaves on the ground.

"Shoat's eaten poison oak," he asserted.

"Poison oak nothing," exclaimed Gilsey. "Pigs fatten on poison oak where I come from. Nothing but cyanide of potassium will make a pig sick."

"Well," half admitted the granger; "but there's the poison oak and there's the pig. He found it somewhere. Any alcohol in your BUNGALOW?" he asked me. He always referred to my estate with an exasperating accent on the word bungalow.

I had used up all my alcohol the day before by dropping it on the brick fire-place.

McCracken went his bow-legged way home, while I ran down to Melrose for sugar of lead, McCracken cautioning me not to be cajoled into buying something else; he was almost sure I would be. We bade Gilsey to watch the symptoms.

I made the purchase exactly as directed, and hastened back, not wishing Piggy to blame me for his sufferings. On return, I inquired how the patient was doing.

"Pig's only drunk," replied Gilsey. "I've seen many a man with a sosh, and I ought to recognize it in a pig."

McCracken mixed the sugar of lead in alcohol and rubbed it on the affected parts, with much difficulty, as the porker was giving a fine imitation of epilepsy, blind staggers, delirium tremens and steeple-chasing. Then he seemed to imagine himself a paper hoop and tried to jump through himself.

Gilsey laughed. "He's got 'em. He sees snakes and is trying to catch 'em, and he's puzzled. Quit with

your alcohol; he's got enough alcohol inside of him already. What the drunken little sausage needs is a cup of black coffee."

McCracken was never wont to pay attention to Gilsey's remarks, as he considered that reporter, for all practical and agricultural purposes, a laughing monstrosity. He was struggling over the pig, in this exciting clinic, when Gilsey kneeled beside the animal and proceeded to address the farmer as follows:

"Mr. McCracken, you are a wise, a very wise man."

"Humph!" said McCracken.

"However, there are limits to all earthly wisdom, and that is why, and perhaps for that reason alone, I have long believed you do not know everything. You will pardon me for saying so."

"Humph!" said McCracken.

"You will observe, my wise friend, that the snorter of this intelligent quadruped is of a bright scarlet hue. He has what we would call in metropolitan parlance a red nose.

"Uh!" said McCracken.

"You will also observe that some of the bristles about this pig's nose are red at the base."

"Damn!" said McCracken, looking.

"Again, you will notice, upon closer examination, that this poison oak is not poison oak, but rose leaves. Even with my limited experience, I know this, for I obtained them from a rose bush. The red spots on this pig's nose, tail and feet are red ink. With very little knowledge of live stock, I know this, too, for I found the fluid in a red ink bottle, and assumed with my reportorial intuition that it was that what it purported to be. Under the porch is a tin pail, in which your sagacious nose will detect the aroma of Fine Old Bourbon, which I purchased in San Francisco. It makes

men act like drunken pigs, and I had no doubt that it would conversely, cause a pig to act like a drunken man. The whole affair proves to me that you do not know the difference between poison oak and an artistic combination of whiskey and crimson writing fluid, though to me the similarity is not close by any means. From the moment of first meeting you, I had a pale gray inkling that you were not omniscient and infallible. Now I have a bright red inkling, and I'm satisfied."

McCracken arose and swore, at first irrelevantly, then upbraiding himself for his rash judgment of the pig's affliction. Amid his wrath, we caught such phrases as "low-down blunder—don't know how I could a' done it—man of my age and experience—guess I deserve all I get."

"Don't get mad, old man," remonstrated Gilsey. "Everyone is liable to make a mistake."

"Not me!"

"No. But don't jump around like a fly in a bottle just because you made one. Everybody does occasionally."

"I never do."

"Don't bother."

"I do bother. I know I can't make a mistake with animals; and now I've made one."

"Well, an intoxicated pig was not within your course of study."

"Yes, it was. That's what I have my knowledge for—so dandiprats like you can't buncombe me. And you can't either; but you did, I admit. You can take all the credit. If I was the man to be fooled frequent, or every now and then, I wouldn't care. But I'm proof against tricks, and that's why it hurts me to be tricked once."

We went into the bungalow and had two consoling drinks over the question, and McCracken's self-denunciation partially eased off.

While I was preparing dinner, Gilsey informed me that my bungalow was not run in as orderly a way as it should be; so he formulated a set of rules, which he tacked onto the door. Perhaps they were unnecessary. But here is Gilsey's idea:

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PROCRASTINATION FARM.

One Bell—McCracken.

Two Bells—Arnica.

Three Bells—General alarm.

Visitors are requested not to mention fresh vegetables and dairy products, nor ask how the farm is getting along.

Loud talking is not permitted near the vegetable patch. It prevents the sprouting of the seed.

Don't say you expected a glass of buttermilk. All our butter is made in Egypt.

Kindly refrain from expressing surprise at condensed milk. It comes from a condensed cow.

The cow is a good cow. Do not question it further on the subject.

The dog Rowdy will not retrieve mosquitoes shot on the highway.

Ladies bringing caramels for the Pig will kindly superintend the chewing thereof and extricate the candy from the pig's teeth as often as it loses control of the same.

Guests are requested to furnish their own amusement between 4 o'clock and 4:10 p. m., as that is the proprietor's period of creative literary work.

If the rooster barks and will not let you pass, pronounce the magic word, Mangel-wurzel.

If any of the animals act in a weird and unearthly way, ring one bell.

If caught on the barbed wire fence, ring one, two and three bells consecutively.

When stung by an unknown insect, do not become excited and upset the furniture, nor ask if anyone heard it rattle before biting, but request the proprietor to relate a much worse experience of his own. It restores confidence.

If a moth is found in the coffee, do not swear, but count ten. Some people have counted a dozen.

No cameras allowed on the premises.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THIS?

Every one has some word which he holds in peculiar aversion—a word that disagrees with his temperament even as an article of food goes against his stomach. The very sight of it fills one with sudden discouragement. It may be a fair enough word, a righteous word, a popularly inoffensive word. But every time you see it, hostility springs to the ramparts of your soul and shouts, Away, perfidious thing! Avaunt! Skedaddle. You and that short string of letters are enemies for life.

In such abhorrence I held the word, "Perseverance." It acted as an emetic on my patience. I loathed the sight of it; felt pained, grieved and unlucky at the sound of it. Coming upon it in print or hearing it in the voice of a friend was like being yelled at by the philosophy of all the ages. And correspondingly, "Perseverance" seemed to have a personal dislike for me. With reptilian insinuation it leered into my face. Jeered me. It whispered, "You can accomplish nothing except by me. I am the greatest working principle in the world. You hate me because you are as lazy as a Bagdad beggar, listless as a cloud, perhaps good for something, but destined for nothing at all, because you do not PERSEVERE."

We prescribe a long trip to Hell for people who keep advising us to change our ways. The more brilliant the advice, the more tawdry our defense for not taking it. And here was one word that attacked me with ever-increasing sharpness, backed with a multiplying pageant of bad omens, that made me feel weak and conquered.

Occasionally I would surrender and resolve to give Perseverence a trial. I would smoke the pipe of peace and meditate and meditate and meditate until it was time to go to bed. On the morrow, a half day would be gone before I realized there was only a half of a day left. In the remaining half I would deplore the loss of the first half.

Once the tilling of the soil was like working on a captured dream. After sowing the seeds I was whizzing with impatience for their growth. I loitered and watched for their coming up. One inspection a day would not satisfy me. I went over the ground again for a minuter scrutiny. Then, after walking away, turn to see if anything had sprouted behind my back. Upon entering the house I would go to the window and take another glance at the expected soil. Writing a story, I would arise frequently and look for developments.

Life had a poor prospect when ambition flogged as indolence hugged me. But I blamed it on the beauty of the universe. The sunsets filled me with too much crimson sublimity for dealing with ink and paper. The skies were so large they made me feel too small to work. The fresh air whimpered delicious lullabies to my strength of purpose. From the soil emanated antique dreams and mythologic nonentities. The odor of a rose was a narcotic. The contemplation of Nature stilled me. From the torpid atmosphere I lifted the fancied lotus and ate with my soul. Enthralled! Amorously stupified! I wandered amid the emblems of eternity and forgot the time.

Then I roused and shook myself like a tree that, in meaningless, I almost was. I became human again; remorseful; ambitious. I called myself the laziest man in the world. This distinction gratified me. If

I was the laziest in the world, I could be forgiven. It was not my fault.

In the course of time I dug up enough carrots to serve at four meals. Two cabbages represented my toil over that blowzy green rose of the sod. The radishes were averagely good. The watermelons looked very much like Easter eggs. The cucumbers died at birth. But potatoes were plentiful; and the chickens, cured of their egg-eating propensities, supplied me well.

With all these ridiculous hardships, it was true that hard times on a farm are not as lacerating as in the City. Resources are more pliable. They stretch when you want them to. But a restaurant dinner won't stretch at all, although more than a few of them feel elastic between the teeth. As for my literary efforts, in spite of this constitutional negligence, they kept me even with the world.

Gradually I lost interest in agriculture. I did desire to plant another lot of seeds. Time passed. The seeds were not planted. My friends said I didn't care. Little did they know how much I cared and that I had merely lost the knack of starting in again. Letters to friends were on my desk unanswered or were lost. Visits to many of them were overdue, delinquent and unpaid, while I dreamt golcondas of high-class, rich-quartz dreams that were worth about \$25,000 a ton.

This tranquility cost me a few hundred dollars one time, and a lot of fame. I was in that state of mind when one begins to feel romances about buried treasure. I wondered whether there might not be some on my premises. Pondering on buried treasure is nearly the last resort of a vagrant mind. When the realms of reality are slighted, the allurements of chance re-

ceive our footsteps. I was even at the point of reasoning out at what most likely spot near my fences I should begin to dig. It would be horrible, mused I, if the treasure were there and I not know it.

But one day I went worse than that. I neglected to read the morning paper. The stationer's boy from Melrose used to make his rounds on a bicycle and throw the rolled newspaper against my door. Whatever the mood of that moment, I had always gone out on hearing the final publishing thud of the power of the press against my front door. That day I paid no attention to it. The condition was obvious. When a former newspaperman no longer cares for the day's news, he is in the last stage of uselessness. I had not missed the paper a day in about five years.

And on that day—I opened the door in answer to a knock, and a trampish-looking fellow asked me if he could come in and have a bite to eat.

"Free lunch for hoboes is usually served in the back-yard," said I.

"I'm no hobo; I'm the King of Oakland," he retorted, picking up the newspaper and shutting the door behind him.

I watched for his next move; which was to draw a large revolver and then to sit down, holding the weapon in his lap.

I had left mine in a desk drawer. As soon as I beheld the glittering shooter in his strong, dirty fingers, the man took on a certain fascination for me. His features became suddenly distinct with more than ordinary realism. The high temples, the wide, rectangular eyes, the slotty mouth, muscular jaw, pumpkin-colored hair and about three days' growth of beard became fixed in my attention to a miraculous degree.

"I'll get you something to eat," I said.

"Wait a moment," he commanded; "I'll go with you to see if you don't poison it."

"Why should I wish to poison the King of Oakland?"

He laughed. "Kings have to be careful. Our lives are always in danger."

At first I took him for a highwayman, and as he made no move to practice with his gun, felt fairly at ease. Now that he gave symptoms of lunacy, I was more nervous of his whim, I sat down.

"Hey, villain," he whispered, "don't do anything like that again without asking me permission. You give me a shock." And he brandished the revolver.

I arose again.

"Wow!" he cried in a hoarse voice. "Don't do that, I told you. Give me notice before you make a move?"

I was willing to accommodate him. Lunatics are ticklish and hard to please, especially the King sort. One little unintentional act of discourtesy, and it's high treason to them. With a revolver to back up their verdict, it makes any extemporaneous subject nothing less than a flatterer. I had never dreamed of being flatterer to a King; fawning for prince's favors. But now I can easily see how the habit comes upon one. I forgave those old hypocritical courtiers. Imagine a despot with about twenty halberdiers and a few black-masked executioners hanging around, and who would care to differ with him on a political or religious question?

I bowed to the King of Oakland and asked his royal will.

His majesty wished me first to turn my back and lift my coat.

"All right; just wanted to see if you carry a gun. Now get me a spread of food. But go slow. Remember, my nerves are very bad and I can't stand a sudden performance of any kind. They make my royal heart jump like royal popcorn."

"Quite so, your majesty."

How easily we can adapt ourselves to the weirdest circumstances! One can be a smiling, sycophantish courtier at short notice. And to think I had ever wasted time at anything when I could become a mediaeval hypocrite in a moment. Not that the mediaeval part was so much of a change, but the hypocrisy. I wished Gilsey were there to see me and take notes for a Sunday story.

"Now, slowly to the kitchen."

"As you will, your majesty."

"And now for a banquet."

"Yea, my liege."

I prepared a meal of bacon and eggs, coffee, bread and butter, oranges and grocery store cakes. While I was doing so, he unrolled the newspaper and proceeded to read. Yet it was plain, through the corners of my eyes and the reflections in the coffee pot, that he was not failing to observe my slightest move. When the breakfast was ready he folded the newspaper and put it into his pocket. Not wishing to disturb his equilibrium by making overt, and what he might consider vulgar, comment upon this bit of royal prerogative, I said nothing about it, and served the victuals.

"Be seated and eat in the presence of your King," he said.

"Your majesty," quoth I, "your humble henchman hungers not, but would fain guard thee whilst thou eatest."

"Eat, slave," he shouted, fidgeting and wagging his revolver.

Had he pointed it or even flourished it, I should not have cared as much. The act would have betokened some degree of reserve and calm. But to sit before a fidgeted, waggled revolver adds the element of chance to personal truculence, and I speedily acquiesced, willing to humor my monarch by eating, although I had breakfasted just before.

"Eat first; so that I can see you have not plotted to poison me."

"I ate with gusto."

He did likewise, after waiting with studious zeal to observe the effects of the food on me. I ate, trusting that nothing deleterious had gotten into the food by mistake.

After satisfying his hunger, my guest inquired what occupation might be mine.

I told him I was a newspaperman in the main.

"Ah, I have dealt with the vile press and been interviewed frequent."

"To be sure, your majesty."

A pause, and then he said, "Say, man, if I could trust you, I could put you in the way of making a little dish of money."

I told him he could trust me in that particular, as I had had that very idea for a long time.

"I don't know. Kings have got to be careful with their plans."

"Believe me, I can keep a secret."

The word, "secret," evidently thrilled him, for he sat up and asked me not to be so wise.

"However," he replied, "I wish I could trust you; you'd make a couple of hundred at least. You've treated me white."

"Tell me the trick."

"I would tell you if I could trust you."

"Really, you can trust me to your heart's content."

"I know I can; but maybe I oughtn't."

"All right then; let it pass."

"All the same, I wish I could trust you. I'd like to see you get the stuff. Now, suppose—" He seemed on the point of telling.

"Yes; suppose—"

"No; I guess I better not tell."

"All right."

"But suppose—"

"Yes; suppose—"

"Suppose that I had—but I have not—escaped from an insane asylum."

"Just for the sake of argument, my liege."

"Exactly. And suppose the whole country looking for me."

"They naturally would."

"Of course, if they find me, I go back. If they don't find me, I'm a big mystery. The King of Oakland missing! See? Of course you do. Now, you, as a newspaperman, know the value of a mystery. You have entertained me at your home. Have you a camera? Good. Now, you write me up. The King of Oakland entertained in royal magnificence by a newspaperman. All the newspapers of San Francisco search for the missing King. Can't find him. If I'm caught, they all interview me. Not much of a story. Captured too soon. If you help me to escape, you prolong the mystery, and write it up big. See?"

"If it were just a little true, how lucky," thought I.

"The grand idea is in waiting until the excitement gets up to 110 in the shade."

So I imagined. I would have been willing to help

a spectacular lunatic escape, in order to get a story, if it were not for that revolver, which he might recklessly use on a passer-by that peradventure would not recognize his royalty.

"King," I inquired with deep feeling, "have you ever killed a man?"

"No; I swear I have not."

"I don't mean in cold blood, with malice aforethought, but merely by accident, in the pursuit of your royal will?"

"No; I haven't."

"Of course, I don't mean murdered him, but just playfully, as a joke, as a royal whim. Did you ever knock a base varlet on the head with your sceptre, to see what he would do? Did you ever, while displaying the eccentricity of genius, to which all monarchs are prone, hit one of your subjects over the head with a silver mace or a potato-masher, not intending to end his earthly wanderings, but, to your surprise, he had to go to the Coroner's Jury."

"No; never! Upon my honor!"

Presently he arose to go. "Friend," said he, "I'm glad to see you can take a joke. I don't happen to be the King of Oakland. Just a hobo. Thought I would amuse myself and you while I ate breakfast. You didn't mind my gun-play, did you? The eccentricity of genius, as you call it, is my only fault." He put the weapon back into his pocket. "I might come back some time, and hope you will invite me for dinner." He asked me for a sandwich, which he took with a jocular bow, and departed.

That same evening, walking down to Melrose, I saw his picture in the afternoon paper. He had been captured, having committed jailbreak the day before. Burglary was his trade.

It was the first time in years I had neglected to read the morning news, which he had carried away with him and which contained a full account of his escape. Perhaps I would have let him remain at the bungalow while I took his photograph and a romantic account of his escape to a City paper. It would have been a fancy sensation. Here Opportunity had not only knocked at my door but forced its way in with a pistol. But the lazy man waits for Opportunity to come around with banners and a brass band, take his arm and lead him to a seat of glory.

THE TINTS OF NATURE

One day I received a quaint letter. My morning's mail was usually full of printed matter, advertisements of chicken-louse exterminators, churns, butter colorings, fertilizers, plows, corporation stocks, apple-corerers, airships, books—everything that genius could invent for folly to invest in. Now and then came invitations to buy type, addressed to a printing firm with which I was once associated. Some of these ads were scrawled with several addresses, showing how I had been tracked from point to point by the Post Office Department. Once in a while, or twice or thrice in a while I received a check from a magazine or newspaper. This would retouch the universe with splendor, and my soul immediately take on a new and optimistic philosophy.

Howbeit, this letter was from a literary friend in New York, requesting from me certain information of which I was possessed. I was ardent therefore to impart it to him.

He stated that he was about to write a story of California life and desired me to send him some memoranda of local color and atmosphere. For, he wrote, "I desire the story to have a truthful setting, which should be appreciated as well by one familiar with the ground as admired by an Easterner. As you know, I have never been in California, and without special preparation (thanking you in advance) might easily put into the narrative matters which a Californian would at once detect as incongruous, to say the least. My idea is to portray the life and sentiments of the good country folk with fidelity. So I rely upon you for the information," etc., etc.

To this communication I replied as follows:

My dear friend:—You are certainly to be commended for being thus punctilious and painstaking about your work. And I rejoice in being peculiarly fit to supply your needs. I have always had a love for local color and atmosphere. Within the last year, this inclination has been allotted a profusion of its loved environment. The benefit of the same I give to you cheerfully, as appertaining to my own acreage, which consists of a full and undivided acre.

Let us take up the matter systematically. Starting with Nature in its broadest sense, then noticing its fauna and flora, its insect life and thus gradually get down to man. I shall not even trust my memory for these things, but take a notebook out in the open and give you vivid, realistic impressions taken on the spot.

Before getting down to detail, allow me to state, ere I might overlook the fact, that the universe is grand. Do not forget this in your enthusiasm over minor points. You may have a fairly good view of the universe in your part of the country, as truly the universe extends to all places on earth. But mayhap you never noticed the grandeur of it in the limited scope and smaller distances out East. So I note it in your behalf.

Next, as to Nature hereabouts. Nature is sublime. Whatever pessimists, humorists and skeptics you may have read to the contrary, take a straight tip from me: Nature is the greatest thing on earth today. Sections of it there may be where the interest sags—dark, liver-colored spots with fungi and decaying animal matter. But, speaking without bias, Nature is, in the aggregate, sublime.

I now take paper and pencil into the landscape,

which lies immediately outside my front door, to give you the local color and atmosphere sketched from life.

The first thing I observe is the sky. It is blue. Far to the north the pure tint is somewhat overcast with a milky exudation, that seems to have curdled; and on the west are fluffy cloud-like masses resembling about \$3.50 worth of absorbent cotton pulled apart and scattered without purpose or design. But over my farm the sky is exceedingly blue. I enclose you real estate prospectus of a tract of land about a mile from here, in which is poetically described the azure of that place. All visitors declare that my azure is superior. So you can judge for yourself. Directly overhead where I am now standing is the highest point in the heavens: the zenith, of which you have doubtless read. It is but a point in the sky and indistinguishable by any mark from the surrounding expanse; but a straight and absolutely vertical line downward from it would pass directly through the spot on which I now stand. You really ought to come here and stand on it, as the experience is without parallel. On my neighbor McCracken's farm, for instance, the line to this zenith would be oblique. But he is an unsentimental fellow and does not care.

All around me is the horizon. Partially obscured by intervening houses, hills and trees, it extends nevertheless in a circle, a small arc of which was unfortunately destroyed the other day by a forest fire. This horizon is full of landscape and local color, some of which I shall attempt to describe.

The general color of the landscape varies, of course, with the season of the year. There are two seasons: the dusty and the muddy. At the present time, the hue is asort of suet antique and scrambled buff, with a veiling of sneeze-dust. This is relieved here and

there with gaudy splashes of scarlet underwear hanging out to dry. Some of the roads are fine pastel effects of Egyptian gray with fences of rack-and-ruin drab. Most of the houses are about the color of a 47-year-old farmhand, the trees in their backyards, or what an artist would call backgrounds, being very much the local color of a cucumber or a frog; the trunks and branches are a familiar brown. Sometimes pretty birds twitter in the twigs; but when you listen they fly away.

In the distance is invisible a lavender haze; and beyond that is more distance, which you cannot see.

My bungalow is a sort of maroon. The paint, in drying split up in a sort of maroon. The paint, in anda posts, which support an awning; are gray, and here the heat has caused the paint to rise in blisters, which I have made dimples by pressing my forefinger into them. Dimples are much more attractive than blisters. The window panes are semi-transparent.

Now for the pasture and its two graminvorous inmates. It is the color of the ordinary newspaperman and magazine writer's pasture, and polka-dotted with brown. The cow answers to the name of Io, if she happens to be looking your way and you carry a bucket of middlings. She is what you might call a crushed strawberry, not so much in shape as in local color aforesaid. This fades to a fine French pink towards the horns and deepens into a rich bologne flush at the other extreme. She is dusty and cross-hatched with straw on the left side from sirloin to flank. One of her horns is stuck through a small cardboard box. Minotaur II, the bull (former sobriquet, "Veal") is, strange to say, an ecru tint; his reputed father having been black and his mother red.

Chickens and vegetables you can describe from your

own imagination. Eggs you have observed in New York. Chickens lay them when they have time.

My surplus vegetables I export chiefly to France. Russia is the greatest consumer of my watermelons. Most of my cabbages I sell to artists, who portray them in oils as lying on a dark table with a deck of cards, a cigar stump and an old violin. Split peas I sell in San Francisco; and my Wagnerian beans go to Kansas.

I ought to caution you that this emblazonry of vegetable and animal life is found only in rare instances in this state. If you are going to write up the ordinary California farm, you should tone down these effects considerably. Again, this display of local color is, you must understand, merely the practical or utilitarian view of my estate. How then, it can be imagined, is this pictorial spread augmented by the ornamental hues of such as the black and yellow fur caterpillar flecking the foliage and eating as he flecks; the red-corseted ladybug strolling amid the alfalfa; butterflies in pale blue, Numidian black and terra cotta; hundreds of grasshoppers with wings like stained glass; the variegated cinch bug in the pasture; the delicate but somber peach-twig borer; the harlequin bees and the iridescent flies; making the air flash like fairyland when a scandal is being told about Queen Mab.

As for atmosphere, there is a great deal of that around here, too; but not as much as when I maintained a pigsty. Chickens, of course, have an atmosphere of their own; all animals have. But so many fragrant breezes dally around this part of the country, taking the Augean odors occasionally to Santa Clara County, that the air is practically fresh all the time.

If it isn't we use chloride of lime. So the usual atmosphere is one of industry and contentment.

I arise with the lark, and write stories, dramas, novels, critical reviews, jokes and sonnets until 2 p. m.; then, after a wholesome repast, cultivate the acreage until sundown. Every time the sun goes down, I feel sad, I know not why. Any one who does not should feel ashamed of himself, or know not why not.

Thus we go on from day to day, learning the lessons of life, working hard with brain and brawn, reading good books by the evening lamp, adding to our stores from Nature's bounty, becoming wealthier in this world's goods and the love of beauty; not proud therefor, but rather does it make us modest in our riches and generous to all mankind. This should make your story interesting in the extreme, and unsurpassed in fidelity to the truth.

We now come to examples of humankind in person. First, there is neighbor McCracken. He is full of local color. Peradventure some of it would come off if he should fall into a pond and be unable to get out for half an hour; still is he, to my way of thinking, all the more local on that account. A casual observer would esteem him as exhibiting little more than the neutral shades of a last year's chicken coop in the glow of an overripe sunset. This would be an injustice. Once his overalls and shirt were blue, his face a sort of tokay, and his wide-spreading beard an Iowa brown. He is but the memoirs of all these now, as their pristine tones have merged into one another.

McCracken has a kind of straw-colored wife. She is tall, Puritanical and very fond of being silent. Her complexion is that of a cement sidewalk; nose somewhat darker; and she is moose-eyed; the mouth is sharper on one side than the other, like a small par-

snip. Her hair is of an autumnal okra; hands of a soap-sud pallor. On such description, you might not think she is worth much, but as she works very hard and eats little, there can be no honest objection to her.

I have not the space to illuminate all the nearby population, but will mention the most colorific of them all, Winifred Klenkey. Winifred's usual appearance is like the banner county of a State Fair. Her shoes are tan, splashed with bluing and whitewash. Her stockings are a faded scarlet, with white polka dots; skirt a cranberry red; waist pinkish; and apron a faint aquamarine glittering with the yelk of eggs. A once-yellow ribbon encircles her waist; around her neck is a black band from which dangles a gold-plated heart locket; and two green bows stick up from her hair. The said ringlets are of a leghorn hue, above a complexion of oleomargarine, relieved with apricot and a few dozen Lyonnaise freckles. Her eyes are the color of gizzards. Her mouth is so big she can bite a 5-cent pie in half and, without choking, ask if You are going to eat all the rest of it. She loves and is loved by a yokel within six telegraph poles of her home, but who has confided to me that he thinks her untrue to him, and wants to know if it were not better to relinquish her now than wait until the separation might cause him still more anguish. I said, Be brave and trust to luck. He said he would do so and that my advice had made him feel better right away.

Thus you see how we live, replete with local color and atmosphere, far more exalted than our sunless fellow-creatures in the City.

Now, I desire you to write and tell me if you intend to have mangel-wurzels in your story, as I can tell you enough about them to make all your rival authors jealous and heart-sick. They will swoon with

despair and bump their noses on the weathered oak of their desks if you should make use of my knowledge of mangel-wurzels. I would require about a week to transcribe most of what I know about them.

Wishing you cherubimical success and circumforaneous fame, I remain,

Yours,

L. J.

EVOLUTION OF A USEFUL ARTICLE

When dwelling in one small city room, a few years ago, I was frequently at loss for a place in which to lose things—a repository for the useless, a reliquary for the worthless relics of pleasure such as old bottles, faded flowers, newspapers, unheeded letters and so on. In a rented room, one is not presumed to require a large dumping-ground for his poverty-stricken convenience. The funerals of his wasted materials should not occupy the attention of the household to any marked degree. And yet, throughout existence we all cast behind us innumerable things no longer of worth, scraps, remnants, refuse, rubbish. Life is trailed by this garbage of ruin. Beauty drags a path of swill. A little too deep for this frivolous disquisition. But, I was merely peeking back at the past. Few of us, kind friends, realize how deep and curious the past from which we trip so blithely.

I have always taken a meteoric delight in throwing things away. Often have I wished to own more things, just in order to get rid of them; to strew the past carelessly with the fragments of enjoyment. And I was prone to do so without concern for the immortal house-keeping instincts of those whose duty it might be to clean and rearrange.

But I forebore. Being a supposedly civilized member of an alleged civilized community, I had no right to conjure up chaos, enrich the world with confusion, pile it with cast-offs. My landlady had given me an art nouveau ash-tray on which to deposit such chaos, confusion and what not. But had I the right as a potentate, and were the inhabitants my slaves, I surely would make them work. There would be no in-

dolence in my dominions. I should have a score of flunkys following me about and picking up things.

Should some one present me with a diamond ring, I would strip off the wrapping paper and string, drop them on the polar bear rug, break the plush box in two, throw one piece at the piano and the other at the Venus de Milo; then put the ring on my finger.

On receiving an editor's check for \$1000, and before placing it in my alligator-skin wallet, I would tear the accompanying letter and envelope into little bits and toss them nonchalantly at the chandelier.

When the recipient of a large green-and-gold porcelain vase, securely packed in a box of excelsior, I would smash open the box, slide the boards under the parlor chairs and dig through the excelsior swiftly, casting it all around me; then carry the vase to the mantelpiece, perhaps dropping it accidentally on the fire-tongs, and light a cigarette.

Searching for an article in my trunk, I would heave to the ceiling the intervening contents until finding the article wished for.

When eating bananas in my robes of state, I would fling the skins to the polished floor or at the faces of my gentlemen-in-waiting and over my shoulder at the power behind the throne.

And all this, simply because for several months I had had one small art nouveau ash-tray to be used for such purposes. I believe even that when looking for a word in a dictionary, I would tear out the leaves instead of turning them from the page I wanted.

But away with dreams! It was my custom, I remember, when sharpening a lead pencil, to retain the chips and graphite dust on a piece of paper, fold this neatly into a little package, and mucilage the same up tight. These accumulated and were given in charge of the

chambermaid to dispose of. Occasionally visitors, out of curiosity, would open these packages, becoming intensely disgusted on viewing the contents and neglect to seal them up again.

Subsequently I cleared a space on my writing-table for slips of paper no longer needed, old memorandums, useless correspondence, first manuscript copies, etc. These, however, soon increased to such quantities that they overran the desk. The papers were always mixed, amalgamated and sliding. When dawning with genius above my day's work, I had to consume preparatorily a quarter of an hour getting together the pages already written. Daily the trouble spread its confused wings and ruffled my patience.

Then a vast, nebulous, twelve-portiered vision unfolded itself before me. In the center of the vision was a waste-paper basket. I ceased work for the day to go out and purchase one. It was of rattan and held about five gallons; not of water but air; hypothetical gallons. Its working principle was a joy. All I had to do was throw things into the basket, and next morn they were dumped out. Thus the waste-paper side of my life seemed destined to a path of happiness. But one day I committed a blunder. The desk being full of papers that I absolutely could not lose, and which could nowise be disturbed, I looked around for a place to put a fresh page of manuscript. No spot was within reach except the basket, which was half full. Above this heap I placed the precious page. A few minutes later I had occasion to precipitate a bunch of scraps into the waste basket, but took good thought not to forget what it contained.

Any one familiar with the follies and divergencies of the human mind will understand how I succeeded thereafter in establishing several stratum of alternate

rubbish and good copy in that rattan enclosure. So that when the maid came in the morning to empty the same, I spoke forth, "Beware, woman! Touch not that hallowed receptacle. It contains what you wot not of."

She desisted, after protest, in the excitement of which I lost my blank verse manner and placated her in slang.

During several days that twelve-page plot remained incomplete, while I was in high-hopping fear lest some menial remove the basketful. This happened to several stories. So that when I had to get my pages together, it meant a search through many layers of wastiana.

The next stage of progress was the dropping of manuscripts on one section of the floor and discarded sheets on another. The basket, anyway, when full, and packed above its fulness, would topple over on its side and did not accommodate half the demand upon it. Yet these places on the floor came to be so useful and easy of access that they eventually arose high and wide, and merged. Whenever I wished to find a certain manuscript or dispose of the others, the same old search had to be gone through. And to prevent possible loss, a perusal of the whole miscellaneous heap was held.

The growing needs of increased literary activity now called for some new device that could be practiced without exertion. It was a case for inventive genius. So that, when installed in the bungalow, I pondered over the construction of a suitable container of waste paper, one that should require no such delicacy of handling as had my previous ones—a new appliance that a child could operate, a careless, mischievous child at that. Such a one I felt capable of controlling.

Upon a day, writing with unwonted vigor, and not minded with worldly matters, I had occasion to dispense with a newspaper clipping held in my hand. The window was open. Quite absent-mindedly I rolled the strip of paper into a ball and threw it out into the yard.

One might say that the ensuing idea came like a flash. But it was not a plain, ordinary, commonplace flash; it was a fine, extraordinary, rich, rare flash, one like that which the calcium-man directs upon the skirt-dancer.

The rest was the personification of simplicity. I would use the great western hemisphere for a waste basket. The only skill required was to squeeze the paper into a lump and project it out the window. In cold weather, with the window shut, the missiles could be sent against the window-panes and drop thence into a long box, to be upset, when full, out the window aforesaid. Its only complexity was to refrain from throwing anything valuable in that direction. With this precaution, no sifting of the dumping-place should transpire.

Thus scholars can see how, for my purposes, the world evolved from a thiny parcel of lead pencil shavings.

AFTER ALL

I despise a man who is sarcastic without care or care how miserable he makes others feel. He does not care a jot how others care a lot. His jokes are not for general enjoyment but are so fashioned that he consumes all the laughter himself. He observes a fellow creature make a perfectly human mistake, and immediately fills up with glee; then he blurts out a few happy remarks and lets this glee roll into the circumstance with a loud, rollicking sound, which gradually dies away to a sickening snicker. This is very easy. Anybody can do it. But few of us are so enthusiastic over other folks' failures as to try to evoke gaiety in this manner.

Every time Gilsey came to Melrose, now, he appeared with the same raspberry-jam smile all over his mouth. He offered me the opportunity of joining in with his jest and then found I had no sense of humor for refusing to laugh.

"You do not appreciate my subtle wit," he would say.

"No," I replied; "I do not. I judge wit by its effect. Every time you repeat this mildewed, blighted, Sebean jest, I at once feel like a lonely wanderer on the River Styx. The gloom of ages gathers about me. My heart is chilled. Beautiful memories shudder and fall to the purgatorial sod. I have visions of lopsided ghosts gesticulating in dismay. I get the Elysian blues. Melancholy hangs on me like a robe of cobwebs. Other phenomena take place which it would be useless to mention. But it is proof to me that there is no real humor in that which you express so jauntily. Were it humor, I should doubtless smile against

my own will. On the contrary it only causes me bitterness."

I do not think Gilsey understood a word of this. He was too superficial. But what can you expect from a poor, underpaid reporter? I mean underpaid in regard to living expenses; as to ability he was remunerated far beyond his merits.

Suppose you should give expression to a conceit you considered funny; not that it actually were so, but you considered it to be. We may even assume, for the sake of argument, that it is funny, very funny. But would you wish to arouse merriment on the part of one listener with it time after time again? Does not a joke become old and haggard? Those to whom it is a novelty may be amused in spite of its malice. But why expect one man to laugh and grow fat on it continuously.

It became Gilsey's habit, when he visited Procrastination Farm, to present me with a parcel of carrots, accompanied by the statement that the ordinary canned goods produced on a farm must become monotonous, and so he had brought me some fresh vegetables from the City.

"Gilsey," said I, "the long-tailed carrot is not, as I understand it, conducive to jocularity in any form. There must be some unfortunate idiosyncrasy in your brain, perhaps hereditary, that makes you believe to the contrary. The belief is a hallucination, and would it were in my power to help you eradicate it. I extend you my heartfelt pity."

He rejoined: "I do this only to show, in a slight way, my gratitude. Once I was penniless. You took me in and gave me food and shelter. You backed my hopes financially. I know you cannot get carrots on a farm, and so I bring these. It is true there may be

a selfish motive in the act. I may go broke again. And I wish to cherish your friendship."

That is why I yearned to triumph over him by raising a stupendous crop of vegetables. Just how to do so, I was not fully apprised. But I agreed with myself that by slip or slap I would capture a method, and that Gilsey, on arrival at Procrastination Farm, would be shattered in spirit to behold vegetables galore.

Ah! And I did succeed. You would not have recognized the place when first it showed its agricultural fecundity in a formal way. All the vegetables grew in rows. Each sort was a uniform size and quality; lined up as if on exhibition for the Superintendent of a school of vegetables. There were corn, potatoes, carrots, onions, strawberries, melons, asparagus, cabbages, lettuce, squash, tomatoes. Every season of the year produced something. Oats, corn and red clover grew for Io and Minotaur. From a distance, the rose bushes looked like a gala fleet under full sail.

"Clara," said I one day—

(We had been married for more than a year.)

Clara was a most peculiar person in more than one way. She would listen to McCracken talk about seasons for sowing and irrigating and fertilizing; then she could follow his advice without forgetting a word. Donning a pair of buckskin gloves, she tinkered and tampered and dibbled with the earth, and when she had said that certain vegetables would appear at a certain time, the time and vegetables came hand in hand. Attired in simple gray, with a wide yellow hat, she played with the soil and the seasons as if posing for a picture. The snap camera never could have caught Clara unpicturesquely. She worked like an artist, decorating the earth with leafy creations.

"Let me rake this row," I said one day; "I want to be a farmer a little while."

There we walked, her hand in mine, while I raked even clumsily with the other.

"That's enough for that," said she.

"How do you know?"

"I know because it's the right way," she replied.

I could not see how that was strictly material and why there could not be a hundred ways of raking. But she knew, or being more successful than I, could pretend to with better effect.

McCracken declared it had always been his opinion that all my place required was common sense; that as for himself he never understood how any one could do anything the wrong way.

I suppose I should have been more common-sensible all along. I was in an murky, awe-inspiring state when Clara found me, the year before. I say "found" me, because I was actually lost in reverie and neglect. The grounds had had a horror-stricken appearance. The windows looked haunted. My writing table and the surrounding room looked like Hope's moving-day.

Clara called with an oh-and-ah sort of a woman whom she had promised to show a country bungalow and its rusticated bungalowier.

We were walking in the "garden." No one save myself and Gilsey knew that it was a garden. A number of thorns still clung to leafless rose bushes, though.

"You look a trifle obsolescent," remarked Clara, as her friend romped with Rowdy.

"Yes; I'm getting butter-milky in the ambition."

"Don't you like your bungalow?"

"Oh, yes! All except my own cooking."

This was a gruesome hint to throw at an unsuspecting young woman.

"I wish we were your neighbors; you could come and board with us," she responded.

She took the shock well.

"Clara," said I, in a fathomless voice, "if I were to make a bonfire of all the derelict papers, broken boxes and tin cans around this place, and if I were to drive off the Saturnalian disarray on my desk, and if I were to remove the brickbats that I have been using for paperweights, and if I were to replace all the missing buttons on my coat, and if I were to dismantle myself of this blue flannel shirt, and attire myself like a citizen of this glorious commonwealth, would you be my wife?"

She picked a thorn from the bush. Had there been a rose, she would have taken it instead. She afterwards said she would rather have done so. However, after this hesitation, she answered, "You might bring about the change on a speculation."

In this age of cynicism, a man who is happily married is almost justified in thinking he has discovered matrimony; just as when they appeared in all their lowly effulgence I fancied myself the first finder of melons and strawberries and pumpkins. You who have seen these products only in fruit stores and on the table do not realize the great big pumpkin feeling in the heart when beholding a large sunny pumpkin of your own growing, solid on the earth and yellow-gleaming through the tendrils and leaves. I felt like telling all my friends to try this new amusement for themselves—wives and pumpkins.

The relationship of man and woman has admitted of so many by-plots, clandestine compliments, moonlight mysteries, ridiculous intrigues, that few of us were inclined to revere the solemnization of these comedies. We laughed at marriage because we were

afraid of it. It was not to be signified by a dove on an angel's shoulder but its truth squawked by a parrot on a jester's arm. We have looked upon a man who marries merely as one endowed with the right to go through the joke for himself. Rather would we afford for a woman a diamond bracelet than that most expensive jewel in the world, a plain gold band.

Happiness is an accident; scarcely ever with pains-taking reared. It is a flower that never was seen in the bud.

I think I have an old-fashioned wife. She loves her home. I think she loves all that is in it, including her husband. She has a thousand ways of saying so; and many ways of smiling it. I think I have discovered love. I once opined I knew it close and far; so others. There was something misconstrued, though, between its willow shades and its familiar realities. The wondrous love comes like an unexpected fragrance to a man standing in an unknown road. Yet it does not vanish like the momentary breeze but magically and majestically takes the days from time, that life seems too short for the shortest gratitude amid its beauties.

"Gilsey," I said one evening when we had him at dinner, "we have prepared for your special benefit this bowl of carrots. Partake at once, as we will wait until you have eaten them all."

"I don't see why you went to such great expense on my account," he replied, well nigh overcome with emotion. Of course, I used to bring you a few occasionally, when you couldn't fool the farm into materializing them. But I did not expect to be repaid so soon."

"Reporter!"—I spoke dramatically—"when you will have been deposited in your last resting place, I shall

plant carrots in the lowly sod above you and at the proper time bring around the cow, the bull and the pig to root them up."

"Don't you believe him, Mr. Gilsey," interposed my wife; "he does not mean a word he says."

"Indeed I do," I exclaimed. "Yet may I revoke my stern decree on one condition; namely: that you drink to the happiness of Two in a Bungalow."

Gilsey raised his glass and saluted us; then swallowed the condition smoothly. After a prolonged "ah," he added:

"Make that condition a life sentence."

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